



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Powell Ranger District
Dixie National Forest

225 East Center
P.O. Box 80
Panguitch, UT 84759-0080

File Code: 1950

Date: April 2, 2001

Dear Interested Citizen:

Please find enclosed find a copy of the Decision Memo for the East Fork Timber Stand Improvement/Management Ignited Fire Project. This project is located on the Powell Ranger District of the Dixie National Forest. I am sending this document to you as notification that a decision has been made to implement the proposed actions.

This project meets the criteria described in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 31.2 and therefore can be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a)(4), this decision is not subject to a higher level of review and/or appeal. Implementation of this decision may begin immediately.

Public participation is very important in the analysis of proposed projects on the Powell Ranger District. I want to thank you for your interest and participation in the environmental analysis conducted for this project.

If you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance to you concerning this project, please contact Phil Eisenhauer, West Zone Silviculturalist, at (435) 865-3222 or Jose Noriega, Powell Ranger District Wildlife Biologist, at (435) 676-8815/(435) 676-9300.

Sincerely,

CARLTON P. GUILLETTE
District Forest Ranger

Enclosure

cc S.O.





Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Public
Affairs

Southwest Region
Bureau of Land Management

155 East Center
P.O. Box 10
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

February 1982

Dear Mr. [Name]

Thank you for your letter of [Date]

I am pleased to inform you that the [Project Name] has been approved for [Action]. The [Project Name] is a [Description] and is located in the [Location]. The [Project Name] is a [Description] and is located in the [Location]. The [Project Name] is a [Description] and is located in the [Location].

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Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]
[Title]

[Address]

[City, State, ZIP]



DECISION MEMO
USDA Forest Service
Powell Ranger District
Dixie National Forest
Kane County

East Fork Timber Stand Improvement/Management Ignited Fire

Location and Existing Condition:

The proposed project area is located on the Powell Ranger District of the Dixie National Forest. The legal description for the project area includes all or parts of Sections 1-3, 10-16, 22-27, & 34-36, Township (T) 38 South (S), Range (R) 4½ West (W); Sections 19, 30, & 31, T38S, R4W; Sections 5-8, T39S, R4W; Sections 11-14, T39S, R4½W; Salt Lake Base and Meridian (SLBM) (see attached maps).

The analysis area encompasses 12,807 acres of which approximately 3,930 acres are in Management Area (MA) 6A, Livestock Grazing; 8,542 acres in MA 7A, Timber Management; 245 acres in MA 9A, Riparian Management, 60 acres in MA 2B, and 30 acres in MA 1. Thinning and prescribed burning activities will take place in MA 7A (2,272 acres), MA 6A (600 acres), MA 1 (30 acres), and MA 2A (60 acres).

Surveys have been completed for the northern goshawk and for threatened, endangered, and sensitive plant and animal species. No effects will occur to any threatened, endangered, or sensitive species as a result of actions under this proposal (biological evaluations and assessments are included in the project file, exhibit 12). A heritage resource investigation has indicated that no cultural resource properties will be affected (project file).

Purpose and Need for Action:

Prior to European immigration and the subsequent fire exclusion/fire suppression strategies that were implemented, fire played a major role in the development and maintenance of vegetation within the ponderosa pine belt across the Southern Markagunt-Paunsaugunt Plateaus. Low intensity fires burned frequently (5-25 years) and maintained the forested vegetation in a low-density, clumpy, and somewhat open condition with a good representation of all vegetative structural stages. The exclusion of fire and other past management practices have created a more uniform stocking of trees, at higher densities, and dominated by more late seral species than historically existed. This structure has slowed tree growth and created a potential for stand replacement fire due to ladder fuels and buildup of both natural and activity created fuels (McGinn et. al. 1999).

The 1,500 acres proposed for thinning and the 3,000 acres proposed for prescribed burning were primarily harvested in the 1960's, 70's, and 80's. The residual tree densities of these sites are too high to allow for optimum diameter growth. Due to the removal of many of the large, older trees from previous timber harvest activities, the current conifer forest structure in these sites is dominated by a vegetation structural stage (VSS) of three, young forest (diameter of five to 12-inches) (Dixie NF 2000). There is a need to increase the representation of the larger (older) VSS's toward the properly functioning condition of a 10-10-20-20-20-20 VSS distribution in the ponderosa pine/Douglas fir/mixed conifer type (Amundson et. al 1996). The desired VSS distribution in an area of land is 10 percent of the forested area in the grass/forb/shrub stage, 10 percent in the seedling/sapling stage, 20 percent in the young forest

stage, 20 percent in the mid-aged forest stage, 20 percent in the mature forest stage, and 20 percent in the old forest stage (Reynolds et. al. 1992).

The purpose of the project is to maintain and/or increase the representation of large diameter structure by increasing diameter growth; to increase the representation of early seral species (ponderosa pine and Douglas fir), and to improve forest health by removing dwarf mistletoe infested trees. The long-term vegetation goal is to move toward the properly functioning condition through mechanical treatments and return of fire to its natural role in this area (Amundson et. al. 1996).

Proposed Action:

This proposal is within the same project area associated with the September 3, 1997, Decision Memo that approved mechanical thinning of approximately 1,500 acres in the upper East Fork of the Sevier River drainage. Following implementation of this work from 1998 to 2000, additional areas were identified within the project area that are in need of similar silvicultural treatment. The proposed action is to: (1) Use prescribed burning where needed within the 1,500 acres thinned between 1998 and 2000; (2) thin 1,500 acres as described; and (3) use prescribed burning where needed to manage fuels on the 1,500 acres proposed for thinning. A total of 3,000 acres will be affected by this proposed action. Prescribed burning is expected to result in a mosaic burn pattern on the landscape.

Decision:

Based on analysis of potential impacts, historical data, and previous experience, I have determined that implementing the East Fork Timber Stand Improvement/Management Ignited Fire Project will have no significant effect on the social, biological, or physical components of the human environment either individually or cumulatively. The Proposed Action includes tree density reduction on 1,500 acres by pre-commercially thinning unmerchantable trees and leaving them on the site. Dwarf mistletoe infected trees will also be removed or girdled to improve forest health. Resultant slash will be lopped to a maximum depth of two feet and, where access allows, personal use firewood or post and pole gathering will be encouraged. A low to moderate severity management ignited fire will be implemented on 3,000 acres to reduce fuel levels, increase available nutrients, and stimulate understory growth while minimizing loss of overstory trees (< 5/acre).

Other Provisions of the Proposed Action:

If, during implementation of the Proposed Action, any cultural or historic sites are identified, care will be taken to restrict fire from a 50 foot radius buffer zone. Watershed and soil resources will be protected by implementation of Forest Soil and Water Conservation Best Management Practices.

During burning operations, appropriate warning signs will be placed on roads to warn of potentially hazardous conditions associated with management activities. When possible, prescribed fire activity will be coordinated with major user groups and key public officials will be notified of burning plans. In some areas, fire may creep into adjacent stands beyond treatment unit boundaries. It is intended to limit prescribed burning to management units, however, if fire spreads beyond the unit(s), actions will be taken to keep the spread of fire to a minimum. Utah State Air Quality requirements will be met in implementing the Proposed Action. Close coordination with Bryce Canyon National Park will occur during implementation of prescribed fire ignitions. The Forest Service will also work with and meet Utah Division of Air Quality smoke management requirements.

If a threatened, endangered, sensitive, or proposed wildlife and/or vegetation species is found during project implementation, activities will stop in the area until appropriate mitigation or recovery plan recommendations can be implemented.

Fire control handline will be constructed as needed to protect goshawk nest sites, roadless area boundary, Bryce Canyon National Park boundary, and section corner monuments.

No noxious or invasive weed species are known to occur in the project area. The Noxious Weed Management Amendment (2000) to the Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan specifies the implementation of a noxious weed prevention and early detection program, followed by several control options if noxious weeds are found. This program will be implemented annually throughout the project area.

Concerns have been expressed about livestock grazing within the proposed project area. The proposed project lies upstream from Tropic Reservoir where the landscape is characterized by long valley bottoms with small streams, riparian habitat along the streams, and upland vegetation between the riparian habitat and timber stands. Large acreages of mixed conifer stands dominate the higher hillsides with minimal and mostly no livestock grazing occurring within the timber stands. In recent years, livestock grazing has been reduced to the carrying capacity of the riparian and upland areas, and there is no need to graze or force livestock into timber stands to obtain forage. Based upon available information, livestock use on lands proposed for thinning and management ignited fire will be insignificant to non-existing. Therefore, livestock grazing within the proposed project area will have insignificant to no effect(s) on the proposed projects. No livestock grazing adjustments are planned. Therefore, although livestock grazing occurs within the project area, livestock management and adjustments are not necessary and are not within the scope of this analysis.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action:

The proposed activities are limited in context and intensity and are excluded from further documentation as defined in Category 1(b) of Section 30.3 of the Forest Service Environmental Policies and Procedures Handbook (WO Amendment 1909.15-92-1). Previous experience in the preparation and implementation of these actions have resulted in no significant environmental effects individually or cumulatively, to either the social, biological, or physical components of the human environment. The proposed actions are the thinning of timber stands to improve tree growth, girdle trees to create wildlife snags, fuels reduction, and are therefore consistent with FSH 1909.15, Chapter 31.2-6(a), (b), and (d).

Finding That No Extraordinary Circumstances Exist:

The analysis considered the extraordinary circumstances defined in FSH 1909.15, Section 30.5, and determined that no extraordinary circumstances exist within the project area. The environmental effects of implementing this project are limited in both extent and intensity because the amount of thinning and burning are spatially distributed over a large area for benefits to wildlife, dispersal of fuels, tree species, structural diversity, and forest health (mistletoe control). A summary evaluation is as follows:

a. Steep slopes or highly erosive soils:

The proposed treatment activity occurs on slopes suitable for thinning and prescribed burning. Thinning and burning will occur on slopes less than 40 percent. Soils in the project area are not excessively erosive.

b. Threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat:

There are no Threatened or Endangered species of vegetation or wildlife known to be affected by this program. If any are identified during the operation of the program, they will be protected.

c. Flood plains, wetlands or municipal watersheds:

No wetlands or flood plains would be affected by this decision. If any wetlands are discovered or municipal watersheds declared they will be excluded from the designated area. No treatments will occur in the 9A Riparian Management Area.

d. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, national recreation areas:

These designations do not occur within the project area.

e. Inventoried roadless areas:

No portion of the East Fork Timber Stand Improvement/Management Ignited Fire project falls within any Inventoried Roadless Area or other unroaded area as described in 36 CFR Part 294 Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule, page A-8. No road construction or reconstruction is needed to implement this project.

f. Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or Historic Properties or areas:

There will be no effect to any Historic Properties within the project area. This project complies with all federal and state laws.

g. Public health:

Effects to air quality are within standards required for a Class II airshed and will not impact any Class I airsheds. Public health will not be affected.

h. Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for environmental protection:

This proposed action will not violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment including the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

Scoping and Public Involvement:

An Initial Analysis and Scoping Document was sent to 100 individuals, organizations, and government agencies. Eight letters of response were received of which: (1) Four letters expressed support for the proposed project; (2) one letter expressed concern that this is a timber sale; (3) one person is "opposed to supposedly, Controlled Under Growth Burning ignited by man"; (4) one letter is concerned that a portion of the proposed project area may be in a roadless area, proximate to the Bryce Canyon National Park Class I Airshed, and livestock grazing is not addressed in the scoping document; and (5) one letter is concerned with grazing, fire management, the Bryce Canyon National Park Class I Airshed, de-facto roadless areas, old growth stands, and goshawk habitat. Comments received for this proposed activity have been considered in the analysis. Comments may be reviewed in the project file. No significant resource management issues have been identified. This is confirmed by resource management specialist's reviews and reports of this project proposal.

Findings Required by Other Laws:

The National Forest Management Act and accompanying regulations require that several findings be documented at the project level. These findings are as follows:

- **Forest Plan Consistency:** This decision is consistent with direction contained in the Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (36 CFR 219.27). Pages IV-7 & 8, of the Plan encourages the treatment of forested stands to maintain vigor and overall forest health.
- **Consistency with Utah Northern Goshawk Amendment to the Dixie Forest Plan:** This decision is consistent with the direction contained in the Utah Northern Goshawk Amendment (March 14, 2000). Pages 18-26 of Appendix CC contain the standards and guidelines that programmatically amend the Forest Plan relative to management direction in northern goshawk habitat. The proposed action complies with all applicable standards and guidelines and contributes to maintaining or improving northern goshawk habitat within the project area. All northern goshawk nest areas will be protected during project implementation. The biological evaluation discloses the effects of this project on the northern goshawks and other sensitive species that may occur within the project area.
- **Vegetative Manipulation:** All proposals that involve vegetative manipulation of tree cover for any purpose must comply with seven requirements found in 36 CFR 219.27(b). Management practices shall:

1. Be best suited to the goals stated in the Forest Plan:

The use of prescribed fire and tree thinning is consistent with goals for management area allocation identified by the Forest Plan. This decision is consistent with the Scenery Management System Amendment (June 28, 2000).

2. Assure that lands can be adequately restocked ... except where permanent openings are created for wildlife habitat improvement, vistas, recreation uses, and similar practices:

The areas treated will retain a forested cover and no permanent openings will be created.

3. Not be chosen primarily because they will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest output of timber (although these factors will be considered):

The Proposed Action was designed to best meet the purpose and need of the analysis area.

4. Be chosen after considering potential effects of residual trees and adjacent stands:

The prescribed burning and thinning treatments will improve forest health and vigor in the area and will benefit adjacent stands.

5. Avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and ensure conservation of soil and water resources:

The actions under this proposal will meet this requirement.

6. Provide the desired effects on water quality and quantity, wildlife and fish habitat, regeneration of desired tree species, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values, and other resource yields:

Compliance with Forest Plan standards and guidelines will provide for the desired effects.

7. Be practical in terms of transportation and harvesting requirements and total costs of preparation, logging, and administration:

This project has no commercial harvesting component and uses the existing transportation system for burning and thinning operations.

- The proposed actions are also in compliance with 36 CFR 219.27 (c) 4, (e), (f), and (g).

Implementation:

Implementation of this project may commence as early as April 2001. Thinning is estimated to be complete by November of 2004. Burning activities will be completed within an estimated five years contingent upon burning conditions and funding availability.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities:

This decision is not subject to administrative review or appeals pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8(a)(4). Implementation of this project may begin immediately.

Contact Person:

Further information on the proposed actions may be obtained by contacting Phil Eisenhauer, West Zone Silviculturist, at (435) 865-3200, or Carl Guillette, Powell Ranger District Ranger, at (435) 676-8815/(435) 676-9300.



CARLTON P. GUILLETTE
District Forest Ranger
Powell Ranger District

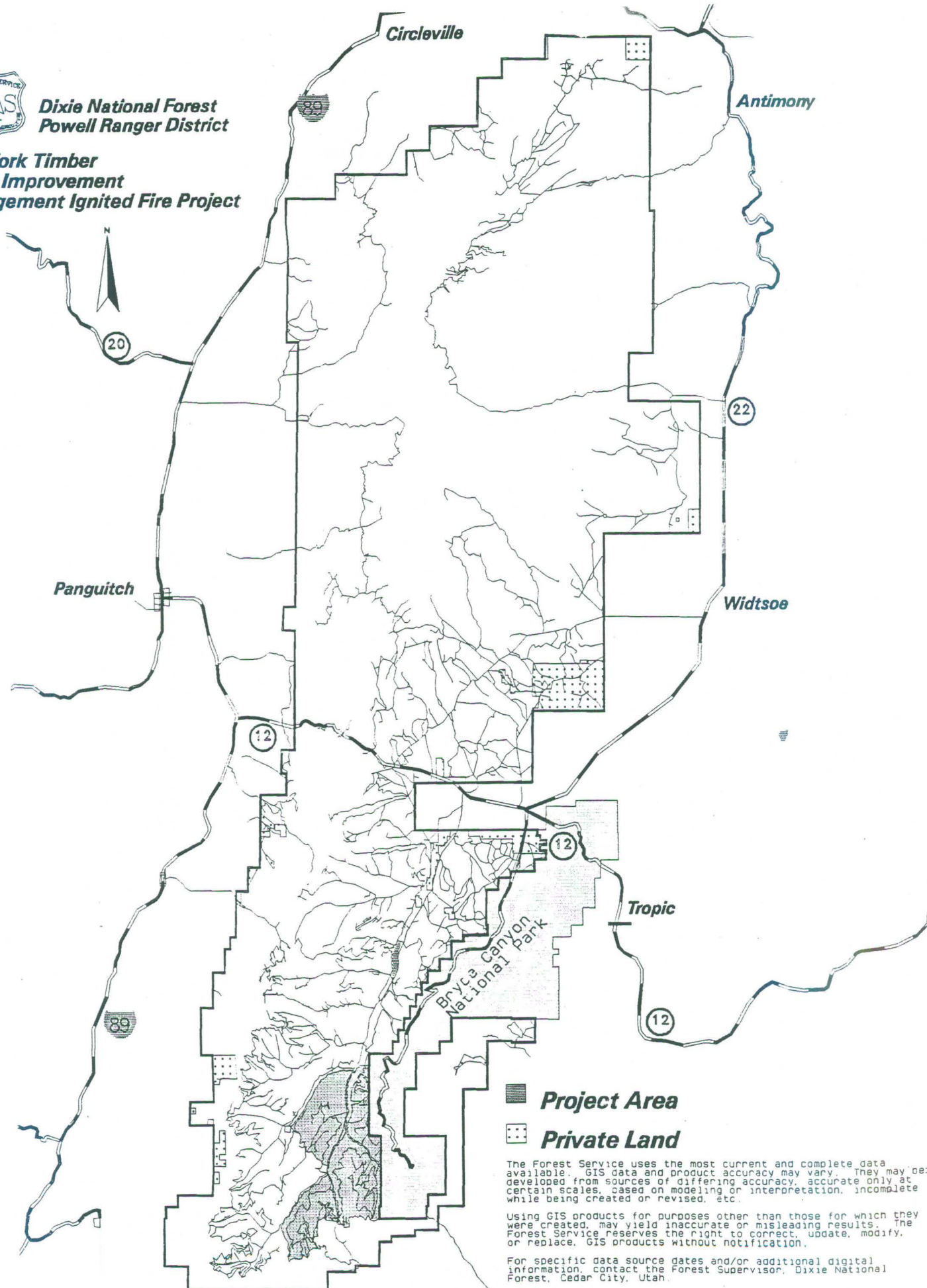
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Date



**Dixie National Forest
Powell Ranger District**

**East Fork Timber
Stand Improvement
Management Ignited Fire Project**



-  **Project Area**
-  **Private Land**

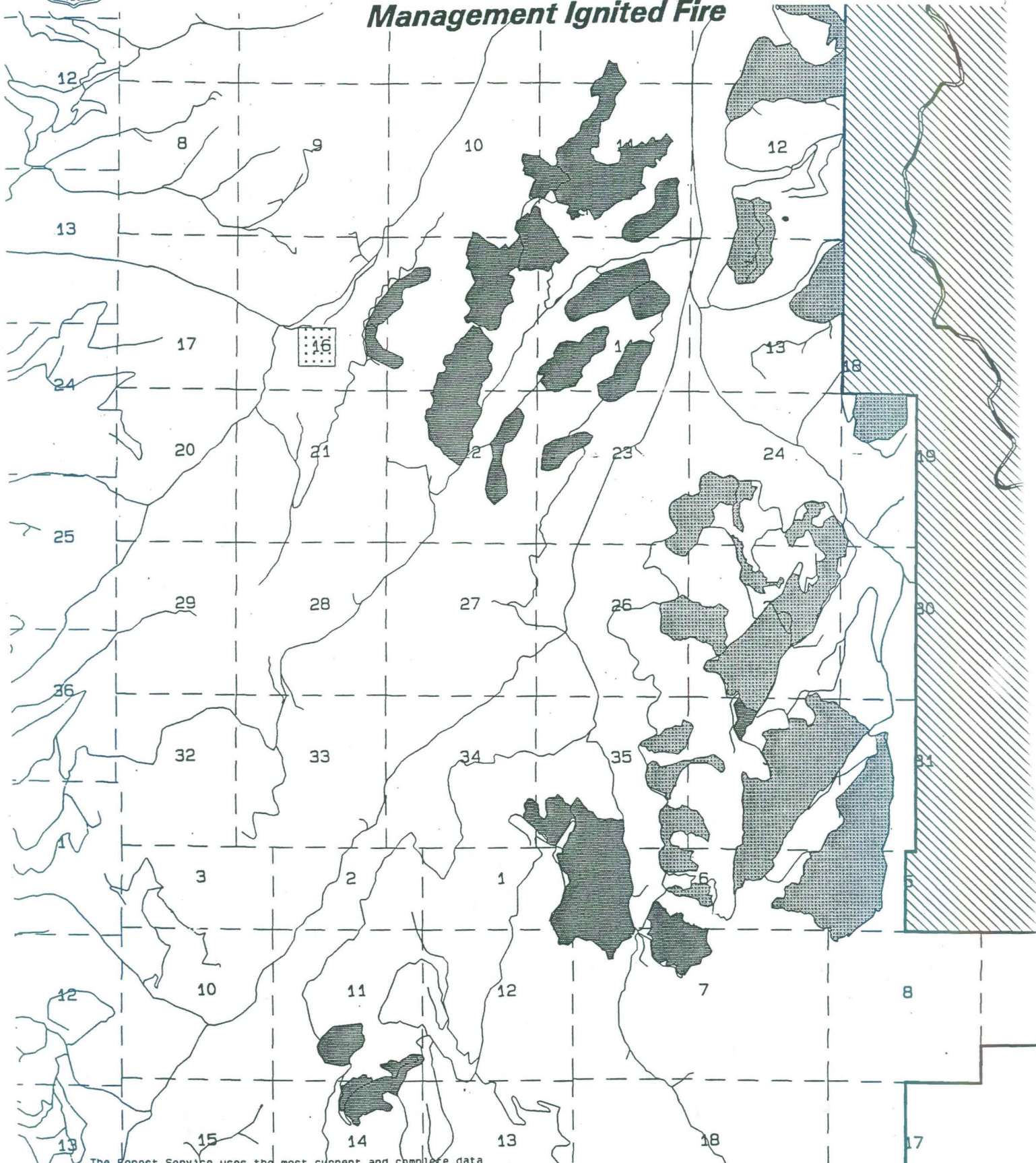
The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, incomplete while being created or revised, etc.

Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created, may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace, GIS products without notification.

For specific data source dates and/or additional digital information, contact the Forest Supervisor, Dixie National Forest, Cedar City, Utah.



East Fork Timber Stand Improvement Management Ignited Fire



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Thinning/Management Ignited Fire

Management Ignited Fire

Bryce Canyon National Park

Private Land

East Fork Timber Stand Improvement Management Ignited Fire Inventoried Roadless Area

