United States Department of Agriculture **Forest Service** **Idaho Panhandle National Forests**

Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District

P.O. Box 159
Smelterville, ID 83868

2502 East Sherman Avenue
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

File Code: 1950
Date: June 1, 2011

Dear Planning Participant,

The Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District is seeking your input on a proposal to accomplish watershed improvement activities within an area identified for the purpose of this analysis as the **Moose Drool Restoration Area** (please refer to the enclosed Vicinity Map). We have completed an assessment of the area to determine what restoration needs exist, and have proposed activities that would move the watershed toward the desired conditions, as discussed below. We are presently in the initial public participation (scoping) phase of this project. Scoping is the first formal step in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. It helps us to identify potential issues, concerns, and additional opportunities associated with our Proposed Action. We need your help to ensure we analyze all the issues that are of concern to you and your community.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in accordance with NEPA requirements to address the need for the proposal, describe alternatives, disclose effects of implementing the activities, and identify agencies and persons consulted regarding the project.

Location

The Moose Drool Restoration Area includes the headwaters of the Little North Fork Coeur d'Alene River from the drainage divide at Prospect Mountain, downstream to Hudlow Creek tributary. It encompasses approximately 22,000 acres in T52N, R1W and R2W (Boise Meridian). There are two islands of private land within the project area; one located in the headwaters of Honey Creek, and another in the valley bottom near Iron Creek. Otherwise, the entire project area is public land managed by the U.S. Forest Service. As headwaters to the Little North Fork Coeur d'Alene River, this watershed area contributes to the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River, Coeur d'Alene Lake, and Spokane River.

Need for Action

The upper Little North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River has been identified by the Forest Service as a high priority for restoration to improve hydrologic function and enhance fish habitat for native westslope cutthroat trout and other aquatic species. Watershed characteristics contributing to the impaired condition include high road densities, numerous road crossings in a failed or failing condition, and riparian areas lacking large wood available for stream shade and fish habitat.

The State of Idaho has identified standards for beneficial uses which are used as part of the Clean Water Act (CWA) to identify impaired waters. Currently, four assessment units (streams) within the project area are 'impaired' because they do not fully support beneficial uses. Factors contributing to the impaired status include sediment, flow alteration, habitat alteration, and temperature.

As part of the Clean Water Act, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality has assigned a total maximum daily load (TMDL) in the upper Little North Fork Coeur d'Alene River for sediment, and is currently working on a draft TMDL for temperature.

Restoration projects have been identified to improve the existing condition, attain the TMDL targets, and promote channel resiliency in the area while maintaining a road and trail network needed to meet other National Forest goals for multiple use.

The Proposed Action

As displayed in Table 1 and on the enclosed maps, proposed restoration activities include road decommissioning, road storage, road maintenance, and in-stream work such as wood placement, bank stabilization, and channel re-routing to improve physical and ecological functions in the stream. **The majority of road related restoration work will take place on roads that are currently not open to motorized travel**. Removal of remnant railway dikes, many of which are located within the riparian area, is also proposed. Harvest of trees and root wads is proposed to provide natural in-stream structure material for stream restoration. Invasive weeds would be addressed and riparian areas would be revegetated at all stream restoration and railway/dike removal areas.

Table 1. Activities proposed in the Moose Drool Restoration Area.

Activity	Amount
Road Decommissioning	172 miles
Crossings Removed	155
Road Storage	92 miles
Road Reconstruction	2.2 miles
Road Reconditioning	2 miles
Railway/Dike Removal	1.2 miles
Stream Restoration	4.2 miles
Timber Harvest for Instream Restoration	36 acres (1,000 trees)
Aquatic Passage Barriers Improved	3
Aquatic Passage Barriers Removed	3

Road-Related Restoration Activities

A transportation analysis process was used to make informed recommendations on the travel system in the Moose Drool Project Area. The analysis included an interdisciplinary team which identified uses, benefits, and values at risk associated with roads in the project area. Recommendations include road decommissioning, road storage, and open road (please refer to the enclosed **Road Recommendations Map**).

Road Decommissioning

Decommissioned roads would be treated to reduce erosion and accommodate streamflow, and then be removed from the Forest Service roads database and no longer be available for use. As mentioned above, most of the 172 miles of road proposed for decommissioning are currently not open to public motorized travel. They are predominantly single-purpose legacy roads used for past timber harvest activity. Current timber harvest practices do not require this intensity of road. Decommission prescriptions for these roads include full recontouring, crossing removal and appropriate closure methods. Thirty-seven miles are planned for full recontouring and 155 crossings are planned for removal.

Only 6.8 miles or 4% of the 172 miles proposed for decommissioning are currently open to motorized public use under the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). The two routes currently open but proposed for decommissioning are Roads 794 and 1532. Both of these routes are within the floodplain and riparian zones, with direct affects to adjacent streams. In order to maintain access to the areas accessed by these two roads, alternate routes have been designated using other existing routes.

Forest Road 2346, which is **not** currently designated for public motorized use, is proposed for designation as a road "Open to All Vehicles" to provide an alternate route for Road 1532. Forest Route 1560, of which a portion is currently designated as an OHV Trail and a portion is currently designated as a 4-Wheel Drive Trail, is proposed for designation as a road "Open to All Vehicles" to provide an alternate route for Road 794. Improvements to these routes (described below under Road Reconstruction) to accommodate their designation as roads "Open to All Vehicles" would be completed before undertaking road decommissioning activities on Roads 794 and 1532 (please refer to the enclosed **Special Decommissioning Map**).

The preceding change in public access is needed to accomplish restoration objectives while accommodating multiple-resource needs in the project area. This project is not intended to re-visit the district travel management plan; proposed designation changes are limited to those necessary to meet aquatic restoration objectives.

Road Storage

During the roads analysis process mentioned above an interdisciplinary team determined which roads were not needed in the immediate future for forest management. These roads are proposed for storage. Stored roads would be treated to reduce erosion and stabilized for future use. Of the 92 miles identified, 78 miles of road planned for storage have no stream crossings or erosion concerns. Storage of these roads would entail a simple database exercise and no ground disturbance would be required. Another 14 miles of road have a total of 27 crossings which would be maintained or removed to accommodate flood flow and store the road in a hydrologically neutral condition.

Road Reconstruction

As noted above, road reconstruction is proposed along portions of Forest Roads 2346 and 1560 to provide alternate routes needed as a result of proposed road decommissioning. Reconstruction would include brushing and blading, upgrade of culverts or other crossings, and possibly road grade improvements.

Road Reconditioning

Road reconditioning is proposed to access areas identified for harvesting trees which are needed for instream restoration. Road reconditioning could occur along Forest Roads 794, 1560C, 258, 1590UR, and 437. Reconditioning would include brushing and blading.

Railway/Dike Removal

Portions of the remnant railway grade are planned for removal in Iron Creek and along the Little North Fork Coeur d'Alene River (please refer to the **enclosed Proposed Instream Work Map**). There are four sections of the railway which are acting as a dike across the floodplain and inhibiting natural channel migration. The railway rock and gravel would be removed and floodplain elevations would be restored along 6,500 feet of railway grade.

Usable material removed from the railway/dike would be end-hauled to a stockpile location for future use. Other material would be carefully placed along decommissioned roads and seeded.

Stream Restoration

Stream restoration is planned for 4.2 miles of stream (please refer to the enclosed **Proposed Instream Work Map**) and may affect up to 60 acres of riparian area. The restoration would include adding large wood (trees) to the stream and across the floodplain, bank stabilization, riparian planting, and the construction of meander lengths in two reaches. These treatments have been identified to reduce sedimentation, diversify streamflow and channel morphology, accommodate floodflow in the riparian area. These channel process and morphology improvements are expected to result in greater aquatic habitats and more resilient stream systems.

Mechanical equipment would be used to access the restoration sites and to deliver large wood. Access routes, which would be developed at six of the restoration sites, total about 4,200 feet in length. The other five sites would be accessed using existing roads. Following use, the access routes would be decompacted, seeded, and covered with branches or other organic debris to protect the soils and promote revegetation.

Riparian area revegetation, including planting and seeding, would be incorporated into the restoration design at each stream restoration site. Specific design measures would be used to protect the riparian area investment.

Timber Harvest for Instream Restoration

Approximately 36 acres have been identified as suitable for tree extraction (see **Proposed Instream Work Map**). Tree extraction is needed to acquire approximately 1,000 trees (30% of them with root wads attached) for use at instream restoration sites. Trees would be cut or pushed over and removed using ground-based yarding.

Tree harvest would be concentrated so fuel treatment and reforestation can occur. Only enough acres to achieve the needed instream wood would be affected. All large wood material harvested from these areas would be utilized in the restoration process.

The current spatial distribution of the units (east and western portions of the project area) provides efficient transport of the trees to the restoration sites where the large wood is needed. The five harvest areas range from 3 to 12 acres in size. "Irregular seed tree with

reserve" prescriptions would be utilized and reforestation of white pine and western larch would occur.

Aquatic Passage Barrier Improvement or Removal

Inhibited aquatic passage has been identified at six crossings (culverts) in the project area. Proposed improvements include the removal of three crossings along Roads 209, 1532, and 437 and upgrading three culverts along Roads 1507 and 209. These improvements would accommodate aquatic organism passage across the road.

Temporary road closures may be needed during implementation of the aquatic organism passage projects. Re-routes would be identified where possible. These closures can extend from several days to several weeks, depending upon the size of the crossing and complexity of the project.

Regulatory Framework

The proposed action is consistent with goals, standards, and guidelines described in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests' Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS; USDA Forest Service, 1995). The activities are consistent the U.S. EPA Clean Water Act (CWA) which requires states and tribes to maintain and restore the chemical, biological, and physical integrity of the nations waters. Project activities are consistent with and designed to implement State of Idaho TMDL standards for meeting beneficial uses in the Little North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Assessment Unit.

You Are Invited

An open house will be held on Tuesday, June 21, at the Fernan Office of the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, located at 2502 East Sherman Avenue in Coeur d'Alene. District personnel will be available from 4 to 7 p.m. to answer questions, with a short presentation beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Your Opportunity to Comment

We are inviting your comments on this proposal. A comment form has been enclosed for your convenience. The comment form also provides the opportunity for you to choose whether you would like to have your name kept on the list to receive future mailings regarding the Moose Drool Restoration Project, or have your name removed from the mailing list for this particular project.

We can best use your comments if they are received no later than **July 5, 2011**. Please mail your written comments to the NEPA Coordinator, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, Fernan Office, 2502 East Sherman Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814. Written comments may also be faxed to the NEPA Coordinator at (208) 769-3062. Written comments may be hand-delivered to either the Fernan Office or to the Smelterville, Idaho offices (office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday). Electronic comments may be submitted to: comments-northern-idpanhandle-coeur-dalene@fs.fed.us. Please include the name of the project (**Moose Drool Restoration**) on the subject line. Acceptable formats are MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF. For electronically-mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of

the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

For appeal eligibility, each individual or representative from each organization submitting substantive comments must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please contact Project Leader K.K. Prussian (208-769-3067).

We look forward to receiving your comments and thank you for your participation in the planning process for this project.

Sincerely,

RANDALL G. SWICK
District Ranger

enclosures

Moose Drool Project
Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District

COMMENT FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

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Phone: _____

My comments are: *(please add additional pages as needed)*

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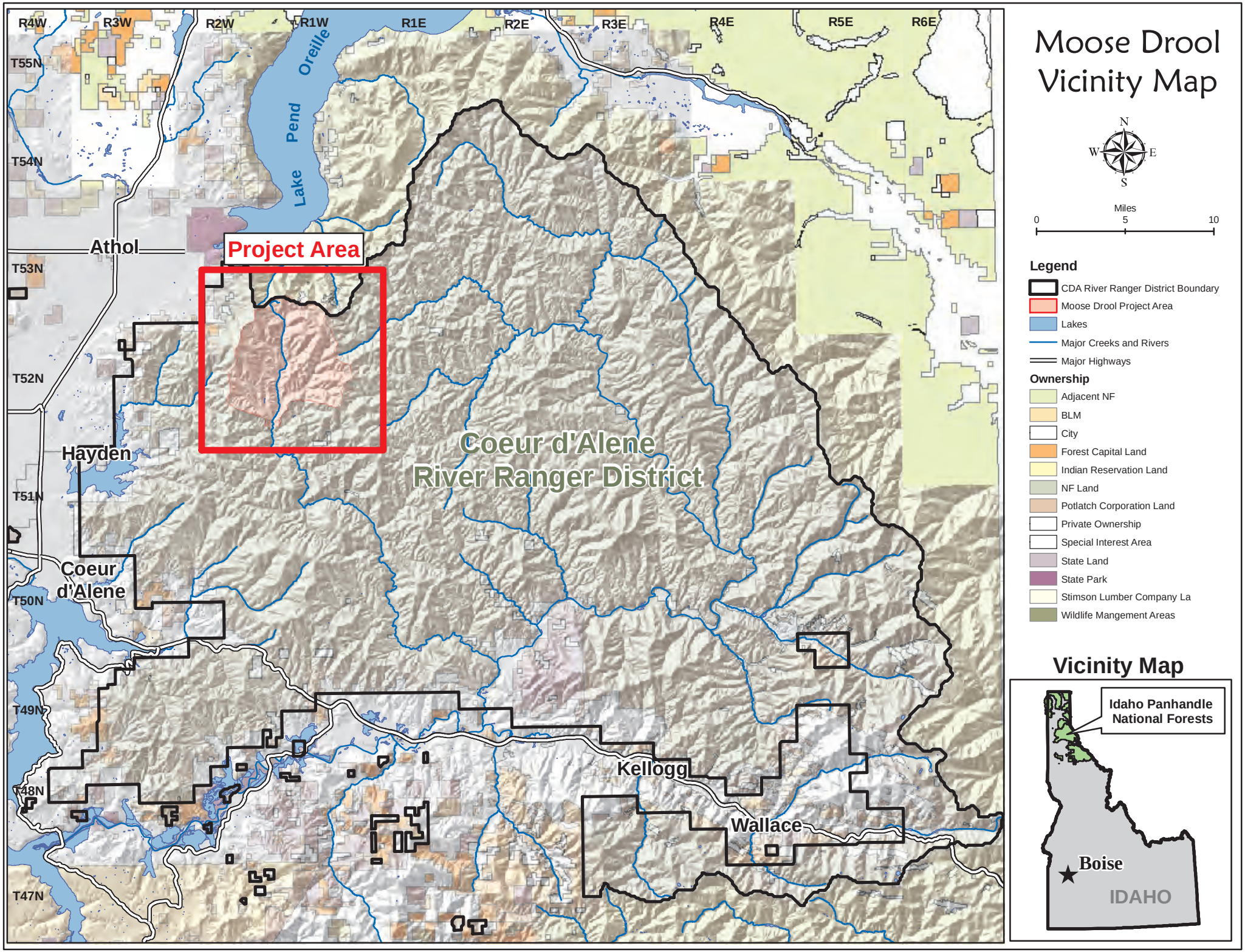
❒ Please keep my name on the list to receive future mailings regarding the Moose Drool Restoration Project (a lack of response will result in no future mailing on this project) and mark the format you would prefer.

❒ Please remove my name from the mailing list for the Moose Drool Restoration Project

Please return this form to:

Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District
Attn: NEPA Coordinator
2502 E Sherman Ave
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814

FAX: 208-769-3062


Moose Drool Vicinity Map
R4W
R3W
R2W
R1W
R1E
R2E
R3E
R4E
R5E
R6E
T55N
T54N
T53N
T52N
T51N
T50N
T49N
T48N
T47N
Lake Pend Oreille
Athol
Project Area
Hayden
Coeur d'Alene
Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District
Kellogg
Wallace
N
W
E
S
Miles
0
5
10
Legend
CDA River Ranger District Boundary
Moose Drool Project Area
Lakes
Major Creeks and Rivers
Major Highways
Ownership
Adjacent NF
BLM
City
Forest Capital Land
Indian Reservation Land
NF Land
Potlatch Corporation Land
Private Ownership
Special Interest Area
State Land
State Park
Stimson Lumber Company La
Wildlife Mangement Areas
Vicinity Map
Idaho Panhandle National Forests
Boise
IDAHO

Legend

Moose Drool Project Area

Road Proposals
- 2 - Storage
- 3 - Decommission
- 4 - Special Decommission

Current Road Designations
- Open Roads
- 4WD Trails
- Motorcycle Trails
- OHV Trails
- Seasonal OHV Trails
- Nonmotorized Trails
- Administrative Roads

- Sections
- Streams
- 200-foot contour
- 40-foot contour

Ownership
- Adjacent NF
- NF Land
- Private Ownership

Moose Drool Proposed Road Recommendations

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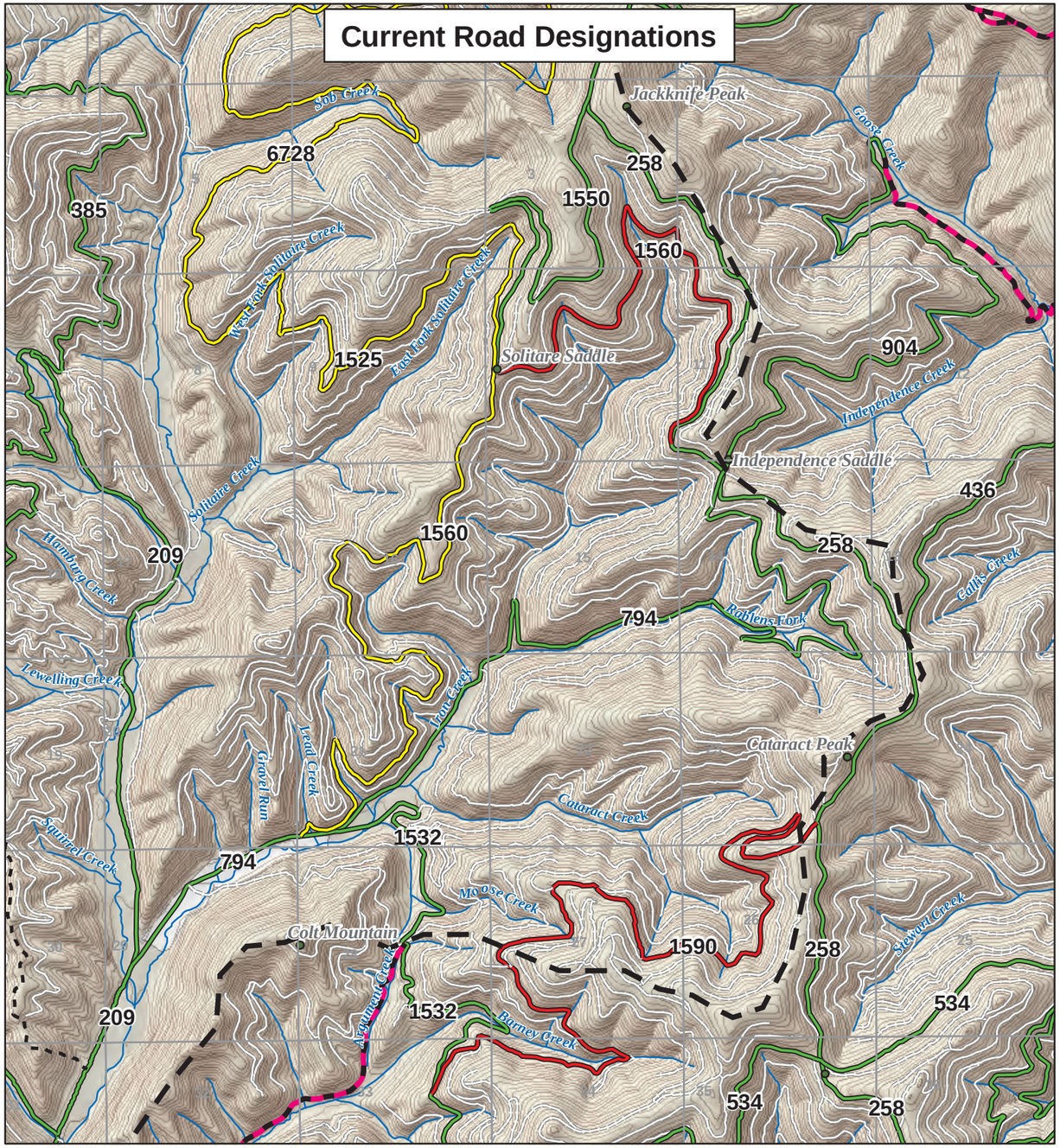
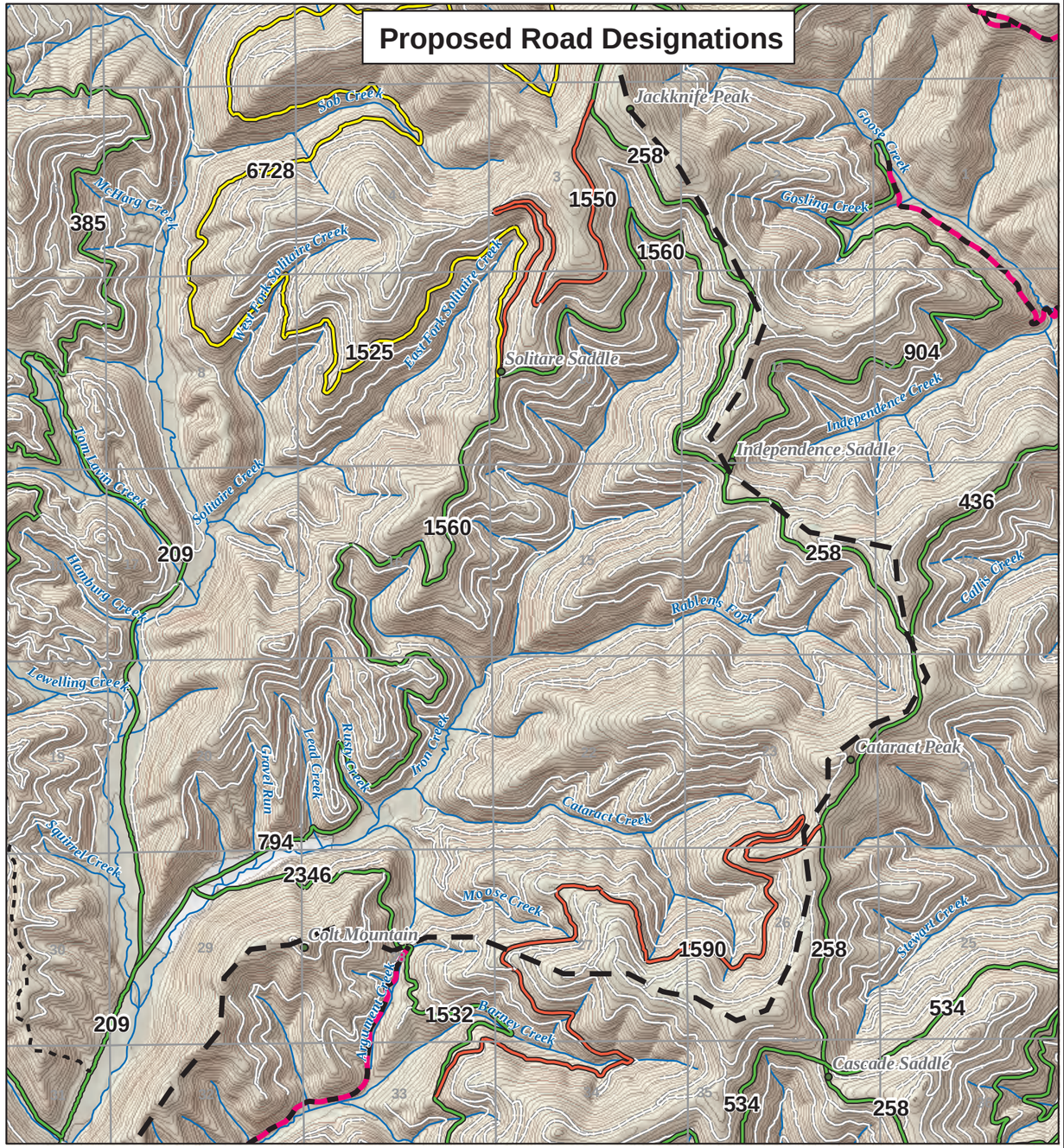
Current Road Designations



Proposed Road Designations



Legend

- Moose Drool Project Area
- Sections

Ownership

- Adjacent NF
- NF Land
- Private Ownership
- Streams

Road Designations

- Open Roads
- 4WD Trails
- Motorcycle Trails
- OHV Trails
- Seasonal OHV Trails
- Nonmotorized Trails
- Administrative Roads

Moose Drool Special Decommissioning and Primary Route Relocation

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Moose Drool Proposed In-Stream Work

Legend

- Moose Drool Project Area
- Harvest Units
- Dike Removal
- Stream Restoration
- Open Roads
- Streams
- Sections
- 200-foot contour
- 40-foot contour

Ownership

- Adjacent NF
- NF Land
- Private Ownership

N W E S

Miles
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