



MEMORANDUM

Re: Roadless Rule Background and Visuals
Date: Summer 2026

Roadless Rule Background

In August 2025, the United States Department of Agriculture published a [notice of intent to repeal the Roadless Rule](#), a Clinton-era regulation generally prohibiting road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvesting across approximately 44.7 million acres of National Forest System Lands (exempting Colorado and Idaho). The public comment period for this ruling closed on September 19th, and the final record of decision is expected to be released in late 2026.¹ The idea behind the rescission is to push more decision-making to the states and remove the federal blanket ban, allowing for a more site-specific approach to managing these areas.

This proposed repeal has already generated considerable debate and will remain a relevant topic for Congress, the Administration, the press, and public now and over the next two years. One popular claim many anti-forestry groups make is that the Roadless Rule protects some of our most “pristine” and “wildest” landscapes by leaving these areas almost entirely unmanaged and untouched. Another popular claim is that the 2021 Roadless Rule helps reduce wildfire risks by “preserving” intact wildlands.

¹United States Department of Agriculture; Forest Service. “Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation; National Forest System Lands.” *Federal Register*, 29 Aug. 2025, www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/08/29/2025-16581/special-areas-roadless-area-conservation-national-forest-system-lands.

The following visual memorandum debunks these claims with real world examples. It shows the consequences of leaving these areas unmanaged and presents examples of inventoried roadless areas that have experienced significant fire damage in the 25 years since the Roadless Rule was adopted.

Organization of the Visual Memo

Section 1 provides maps of the entire Western United States capturing all Inventoried Roadless Areas and wildfire occurrences since 2001, with a focus on fires that crossed into Roadless Areas.

Section II provides a state-by-state breakdown where AFRC operates, showing maps with all Inventoried Roadless Areas and fire overlap. Each state also includes 3-4 specific examples of Roadless Areas that have experienced significant wildfire damage shown through historical Google Earth satellite imagery. Site-specific Roadless Area information is added for context: size, location, Congressional District, and information on the wildfire that occurred.

Finally, **Section III** provides a step-by-step guide on how to create similar maps and images for other Roadless Areas throughout the Western U.S. This section is intended to inform AFRC staff, members, and other partners how to replicate this work as the Roadless Rule debate continues

Section I: U.S. Roadless Areas and Wildfires

Links to Official State Roadless Maps

[Washington](#)

[Oregon](#)

[Montana](#)

[Idaho](#)

[California](#)

[Nevada](#)

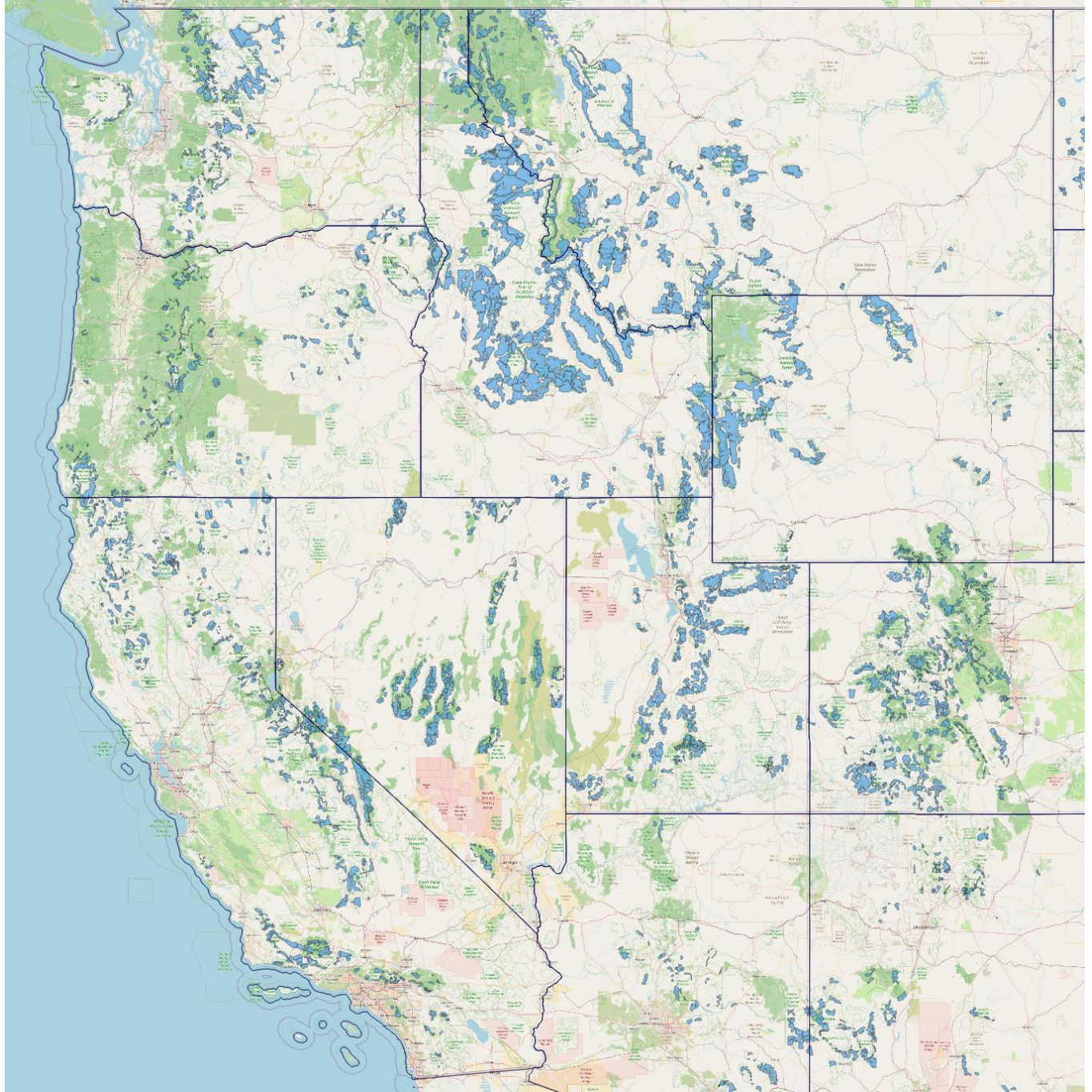


Figure 1: All Inventoried Roadless Areas designated in 2001 (along with Idaho and Colorado areas) according to [USFS](#) designated in blue

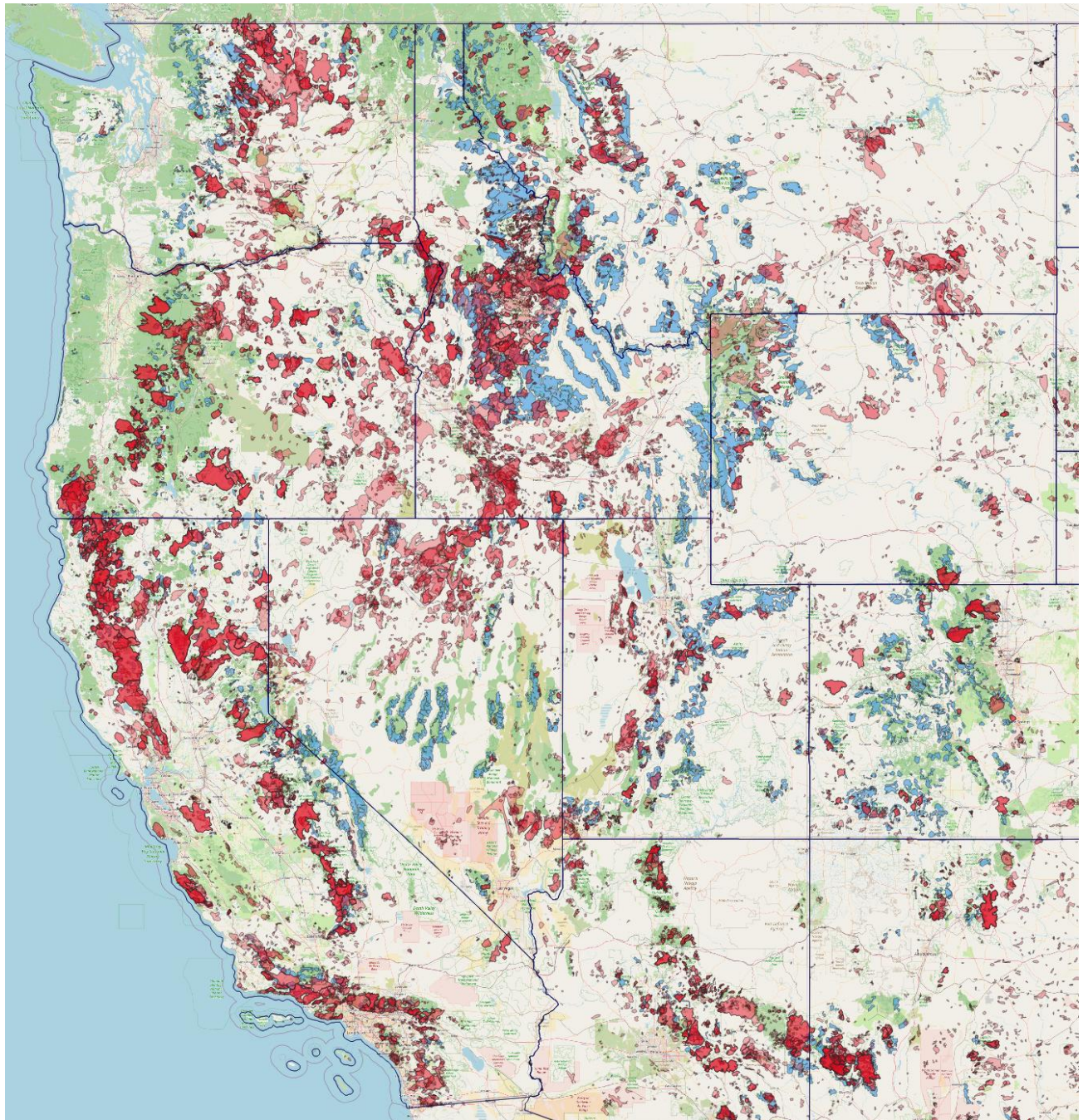


Figure 2: All inventoried roadless areas (blue), and burn severity data since 2001 (red) according to [Monitoring Trends in Burn Severity Agency](#)

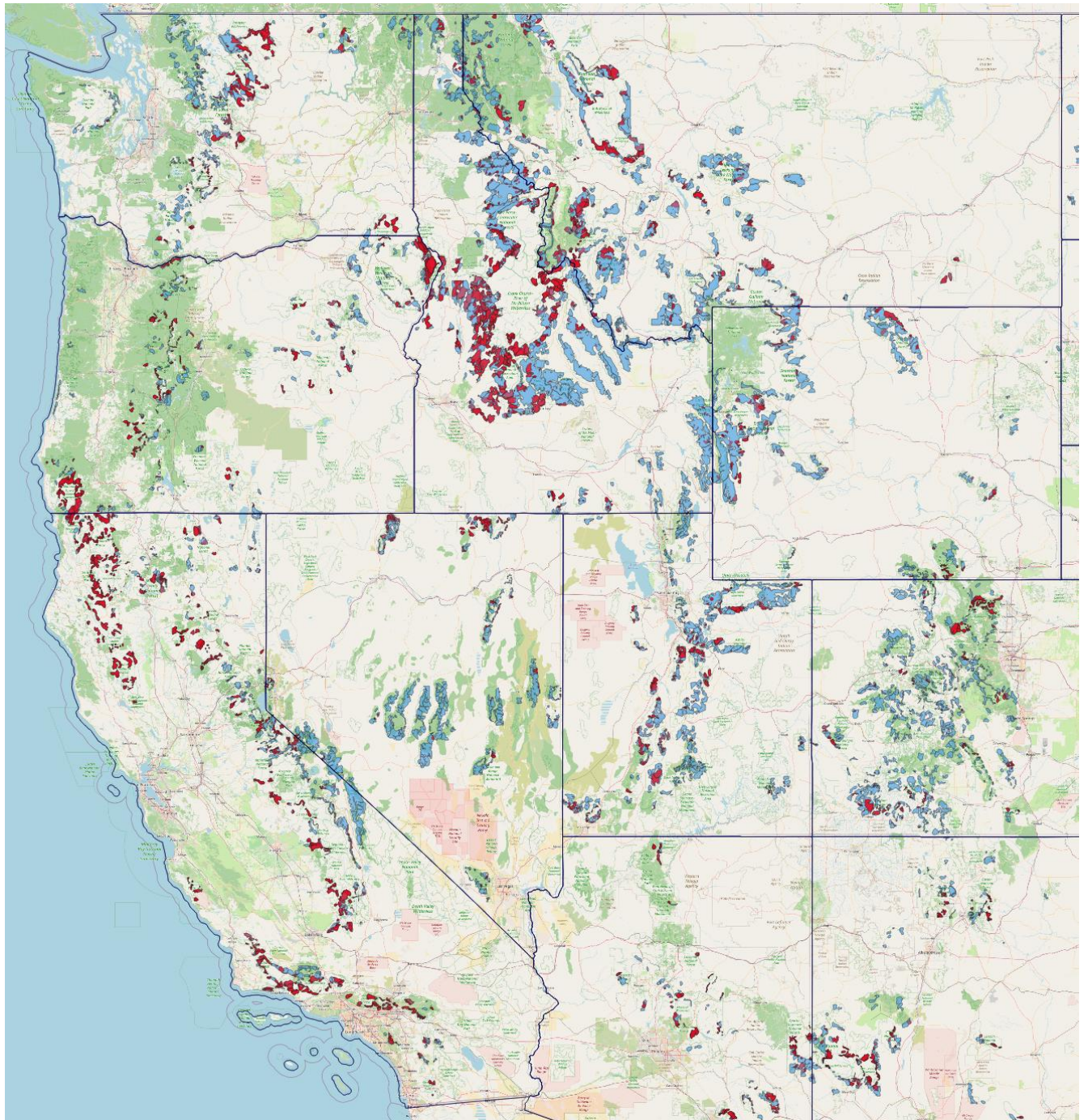


Figure 3: The Intersection of high severity fires in inventoried roadless areas in red

*All maps made using QGIS software and public data from government entities

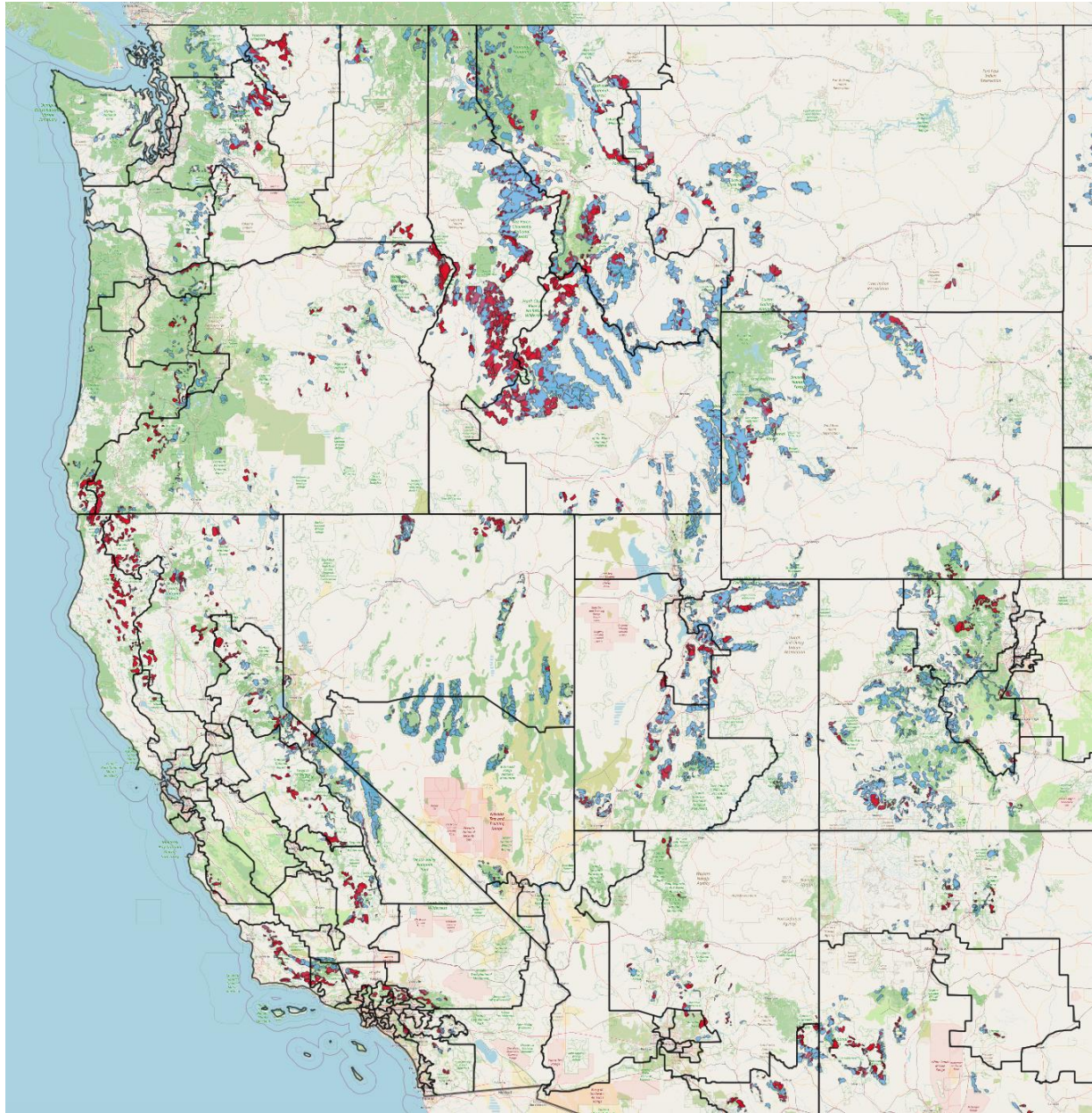


Figure 4: The Intersection of high severity fires in inventoried roadless areas in red and Congressional Districts

Section II: State Examples

Washington

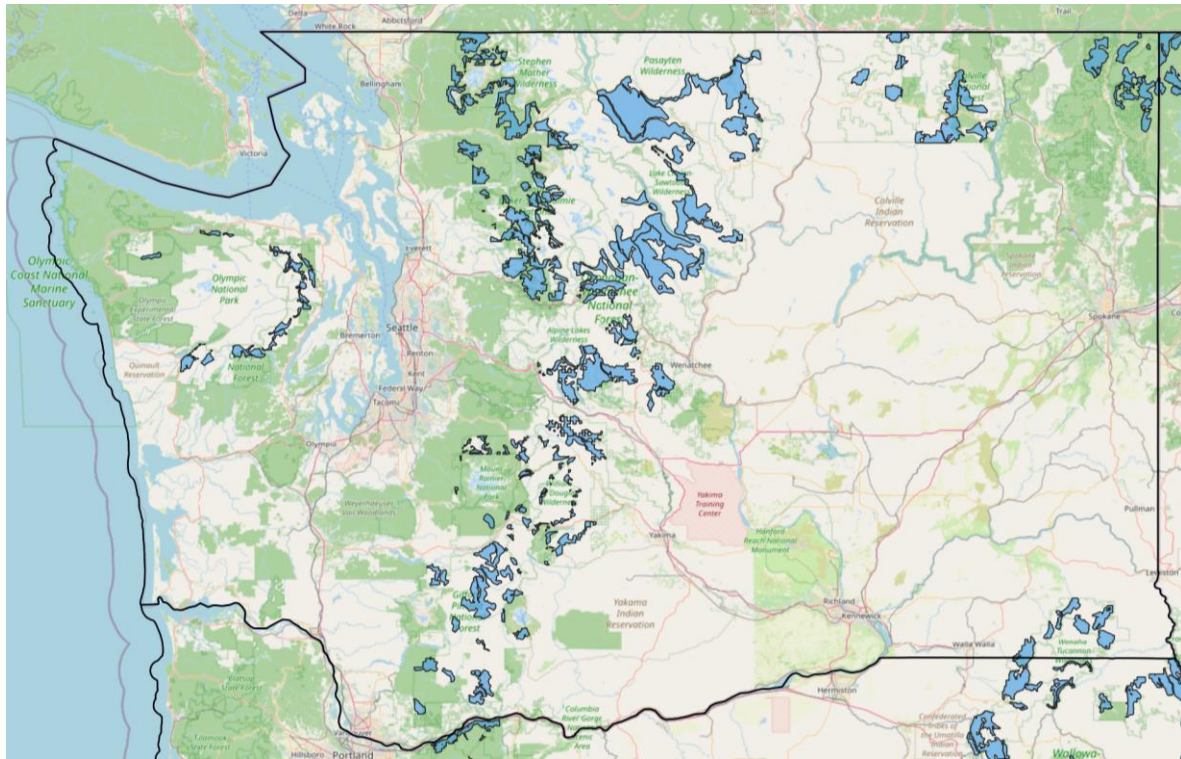


Figure 5: Washington specific roadless area map

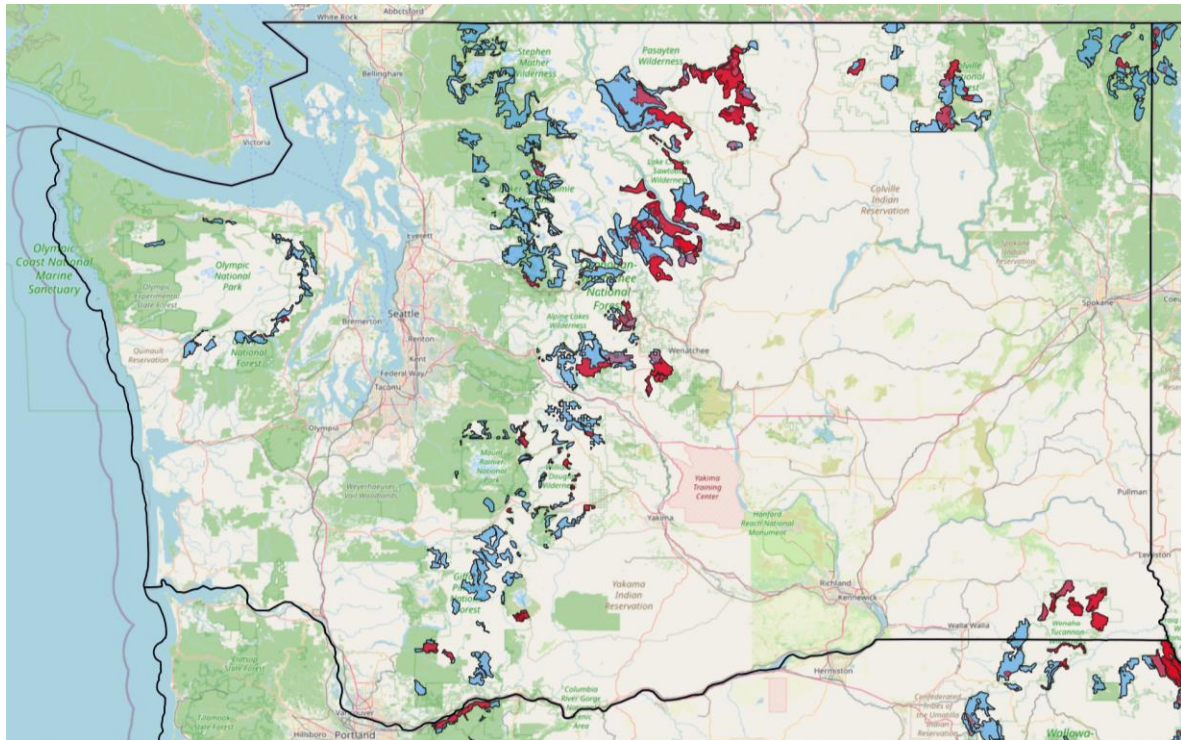


Figure 6: Washington specific intersection with burn severity

Washington Roadless Area Examples

1. Teanaway Inventoried Roadless Areas

72,800 acres in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

8th Congressional District- Representative Kim Schrier (Democrat)

Burned in the Jolly Mountain 2017 fire



July 14th, 2017



July 25th, 2018



July 5th, 2025

2. Bourbon Roadless Area

4,500 acres in Gifford Pinchot National Forest

3rd Congressional District- Marie Gluesenkamp-Perez (D)

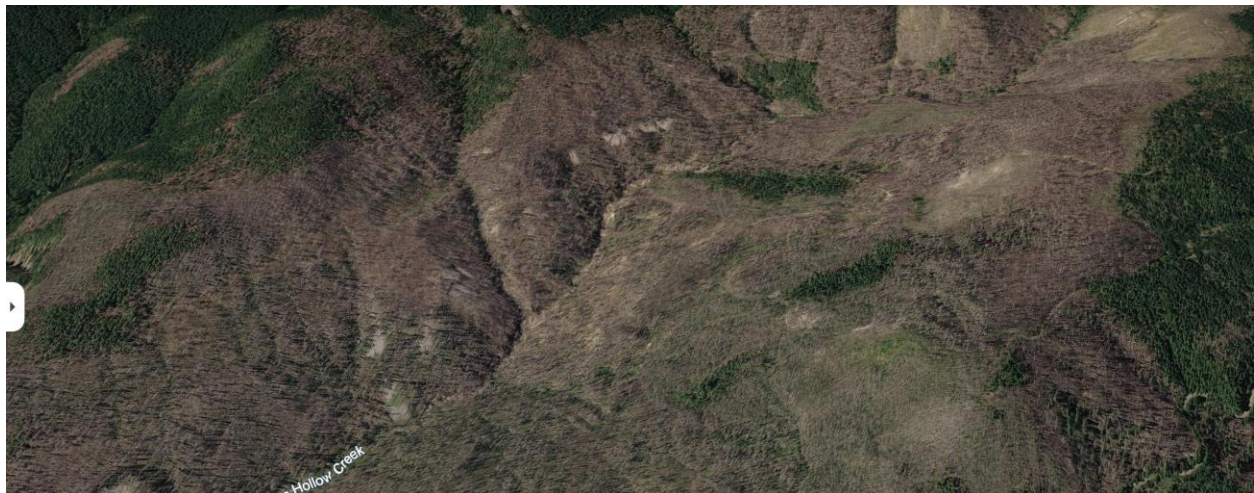
Big Hollow Fire, 2020



July 30th, 2020



July 26th, 2021



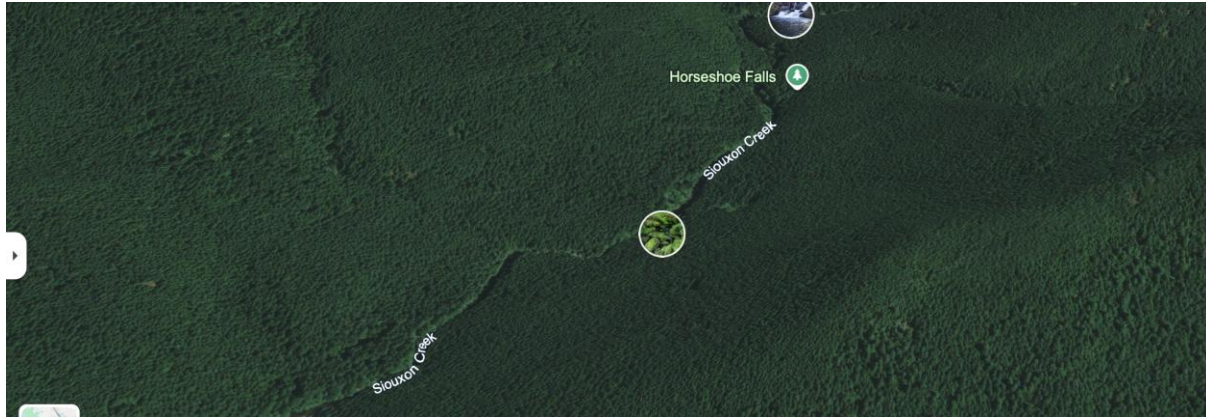
Present Day [Google Earth](#)

3. Siouxon Creek Roadless Area

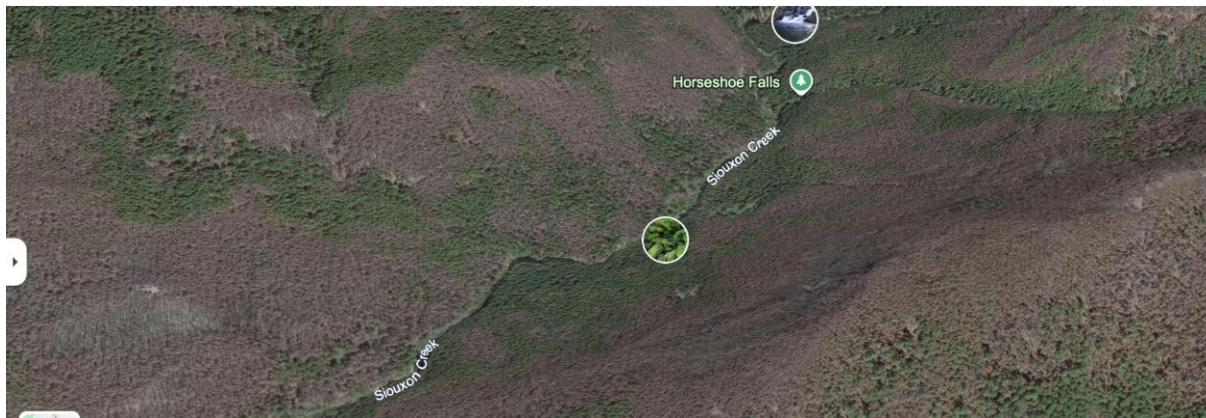
10,600 acres in Gifford Pinchot National Forest

3rd Congressional District- Marie Gluesenkamp-Perez (D)

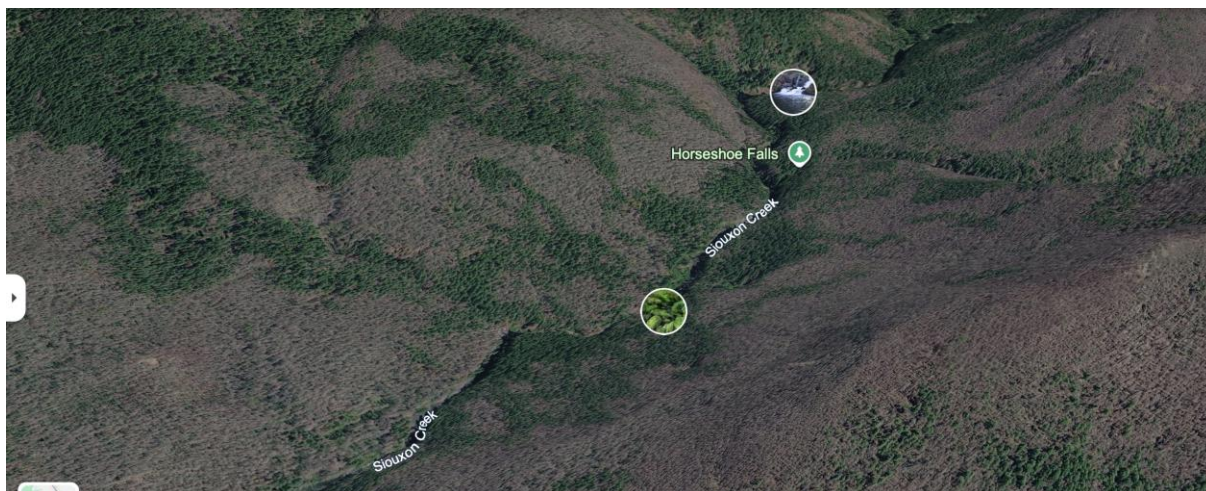
Big Hollow Fire, 2020



July 30th, 2020



July 26th, 2021



Present Day [Google Earth](#)

4. Norse Peak Roadless Area

52,297 acres in Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

Washington 4th and 8th Congressional Districts- Kim Schrier (D)

Norse Peak Fire 2017

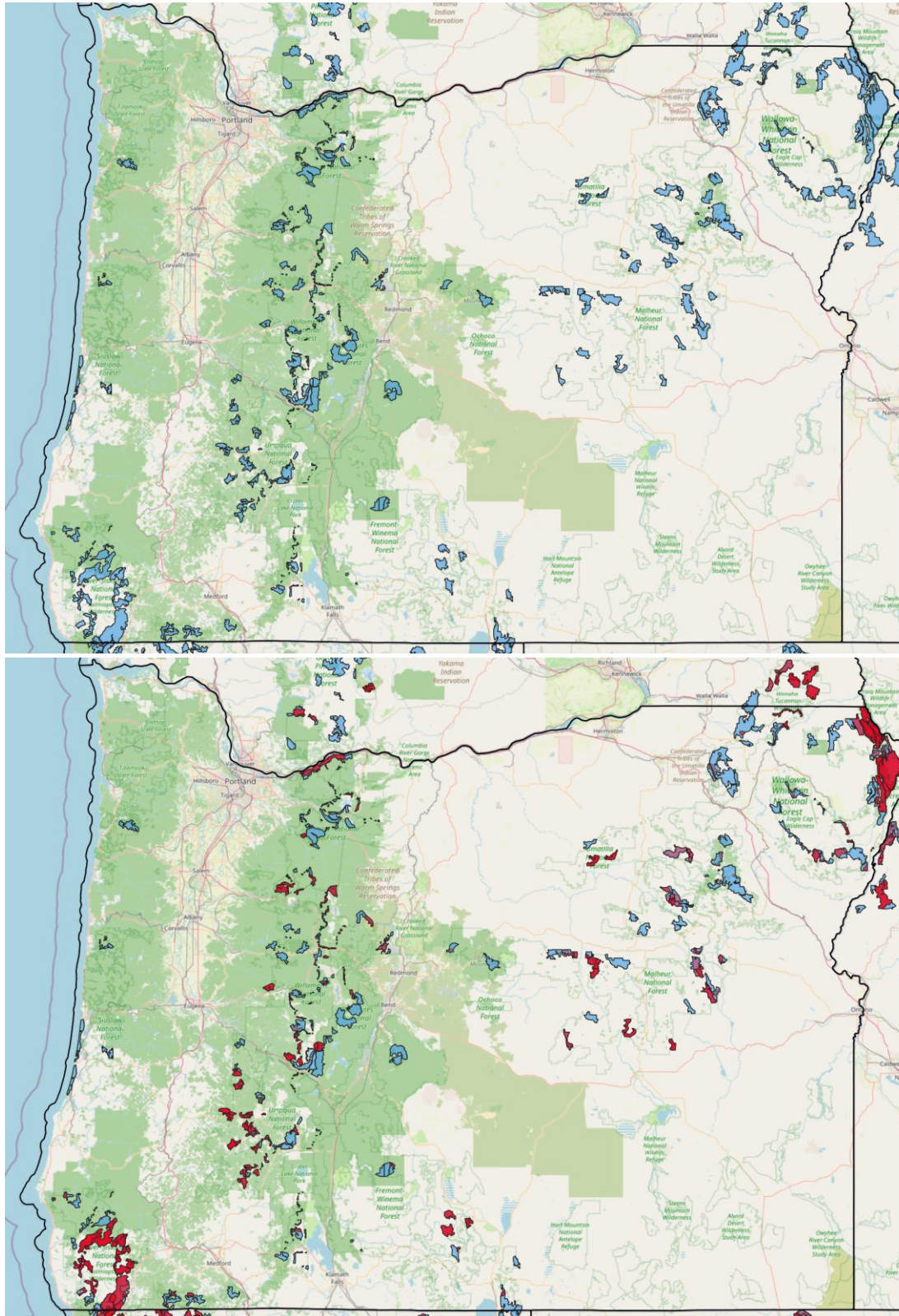


July 14th, 2017



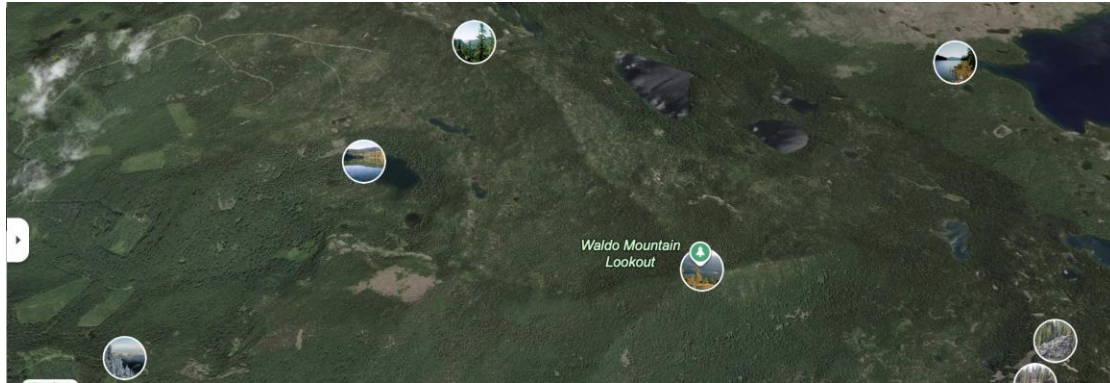
July 25th, 2018 [Google Earth](#)

Oregon



Figures 7+8: Oregon specific IRA map, Oregon specific IRA and burn severity intersection

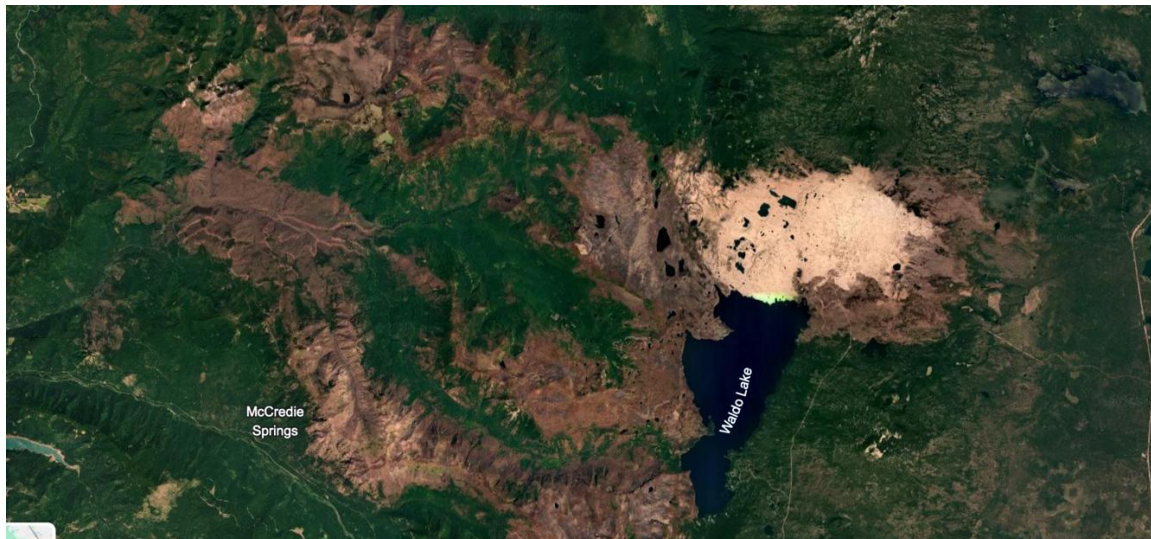
1. Waldo Lake Inventoried Roadless Area
37,000 acres in Willamette National Forest
Oregon's 4th Congressional District- Val Hoyle (D)
Cedar Creek Fire (2022)



December 31st, 2018

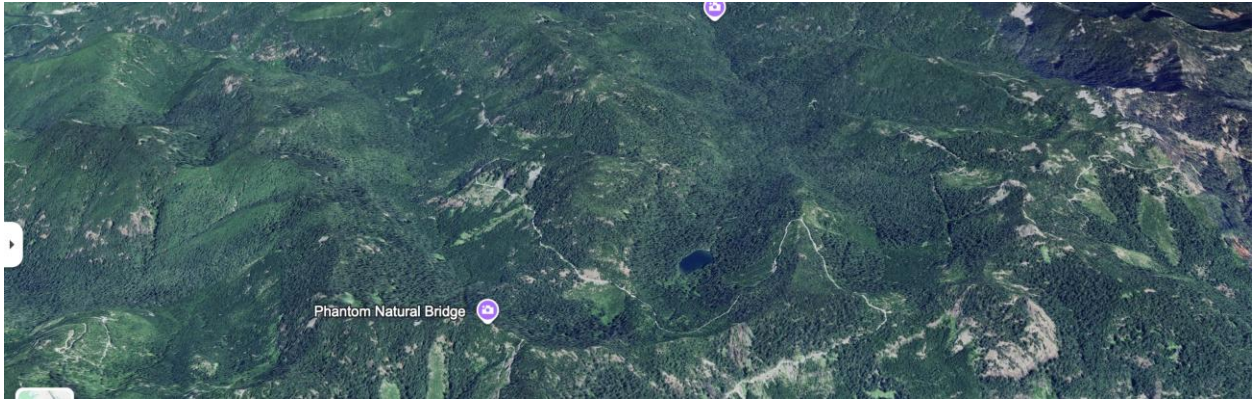


Present Day

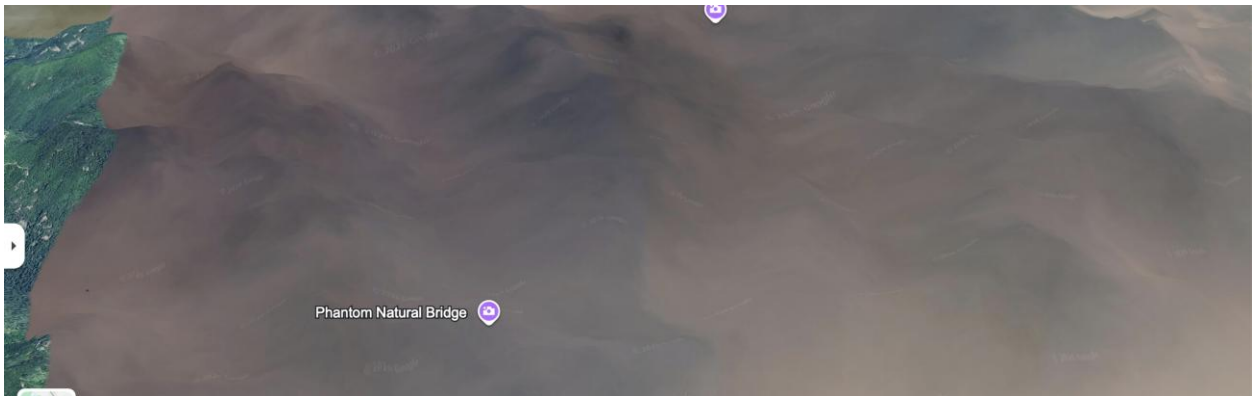


Present Day

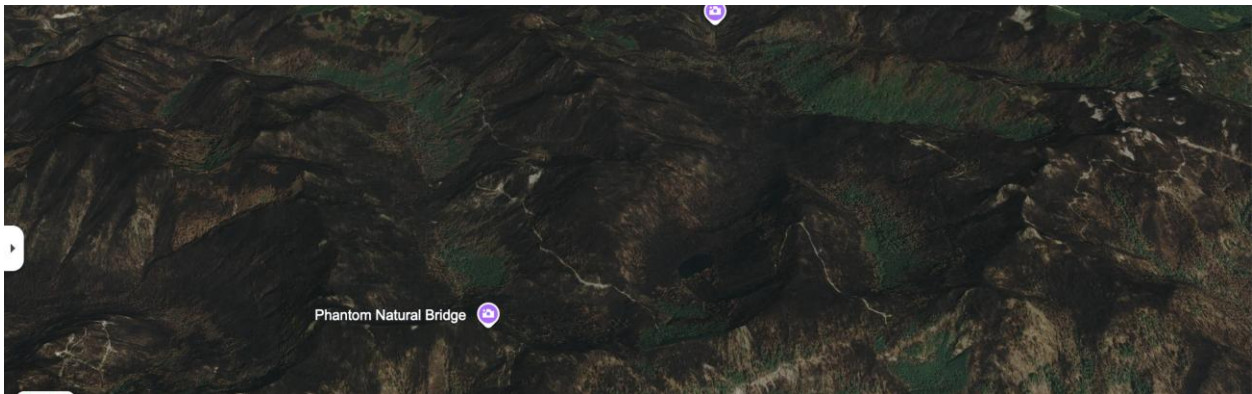
2. Opal Creek Roadless Area
20,000 acres in Willamette National Forest
Beachie Creek Fire 2020
Oregon's 5th Congressional District- Janelle Bynum (D)



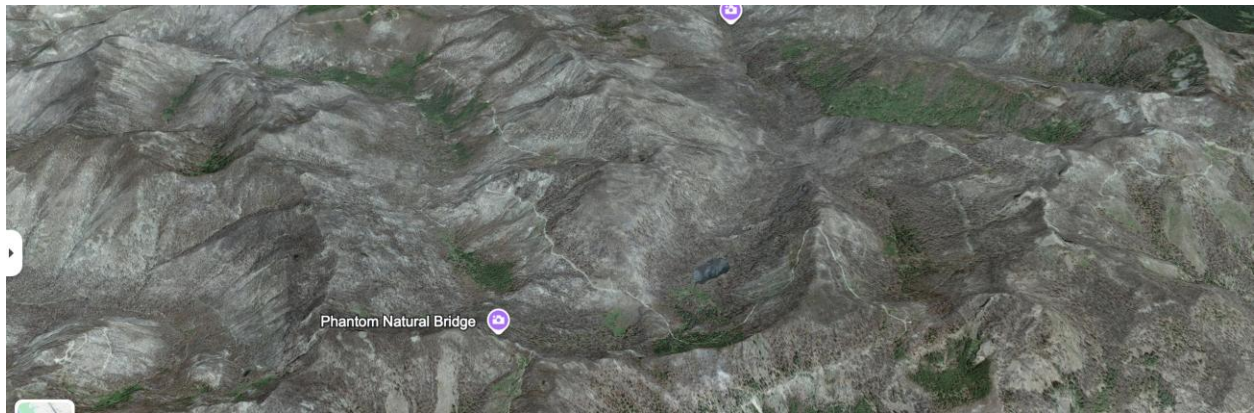
July 30, 2017



September 13th, 2020 smoke from fire



April 19th, 2021



July 24th, 2021



Present Day

3. Mount Hagen Roadless Area
6,400 acres in Willamette National Forest
Holiday Farm Fire
Oregon Congressional District 4- Val Hoyle (D)



July 30th, 2018



September 30th, 2020



July 11th, 2022



Present Day [Google Earth](#)

4. Mt. Jefferson Roadless Area
20,000 acres in Willamette National Forest
Whitewater Fire 2017 and Lionshead Fire 2020
Oregon Congressional District 5- Janelle Bynum (D)



December 31st, 2017

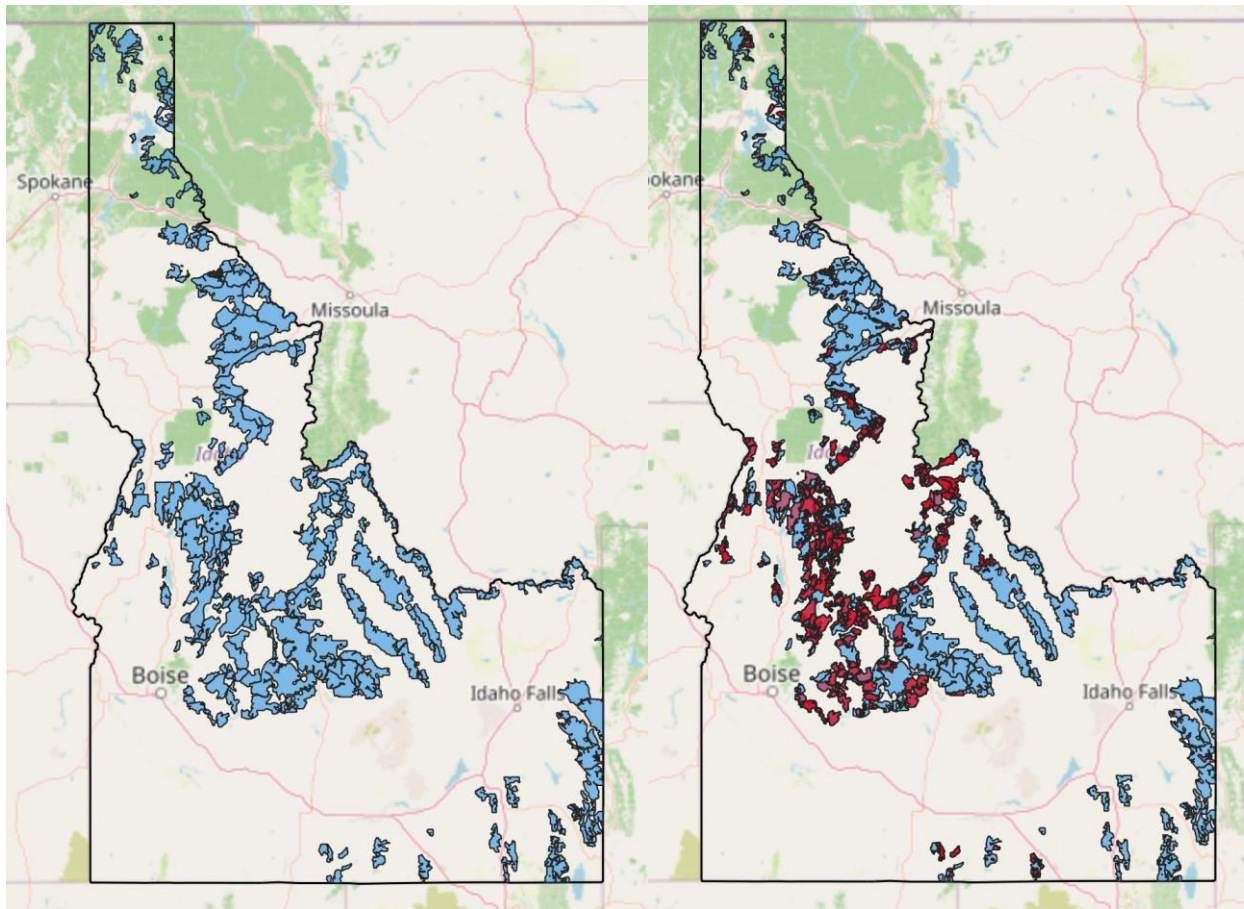


July 29th, 2019



July 16th, 2023

Idaho



Figures 9+10: Idaho specific IRA and burn severity intersection

1. John Day Roadless Area

10,000 acres Nez-Pierce Clearwater National Forests

Idaho Congressional District 1st- Ross Fulcher (R)

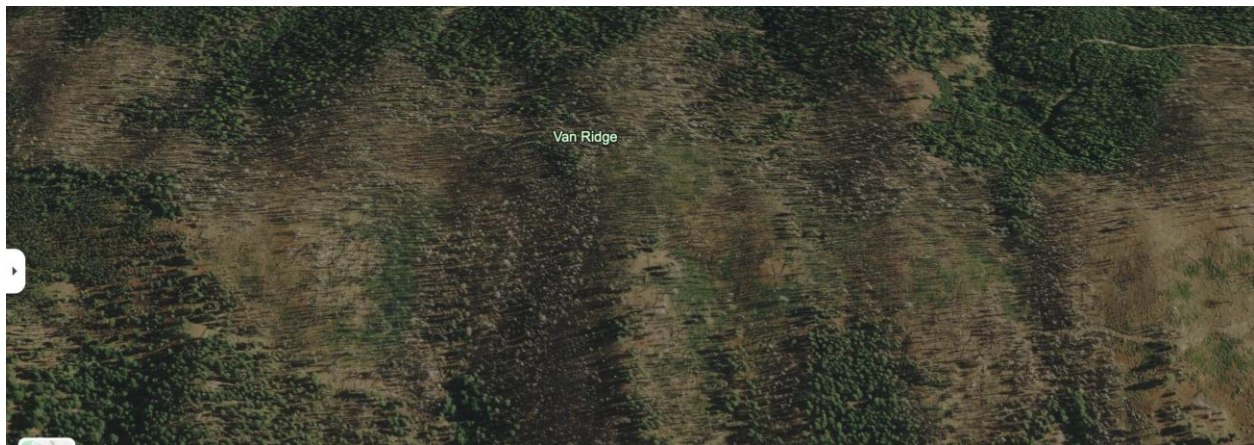
Teepee Springs Fire 2015



July 19th, 2013



July 31st, 2016

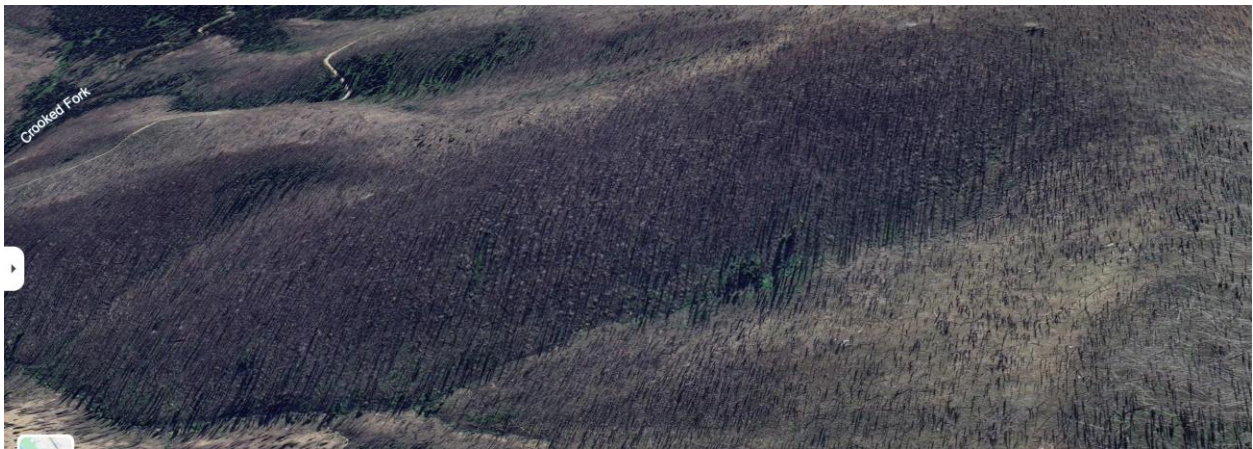


October 7th, 2020 [Google Earth](#)

2. Hoodoo Roadless Area (on Idaho/Montana border)
275,000 acres in Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
Idaho's 1st Congressional District- Ross Fulcher (R)
Boulder Fire (2015)



August 27th, 2014



August 19th, 2025 [Google Earth](#)

3. West Meadow Creek Roadless Area
107,000 acres in Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
Idaho's 2nd Congressional District- Michael K. Simpson (R)
Wash Fire (2015)



June 22nd, 2013

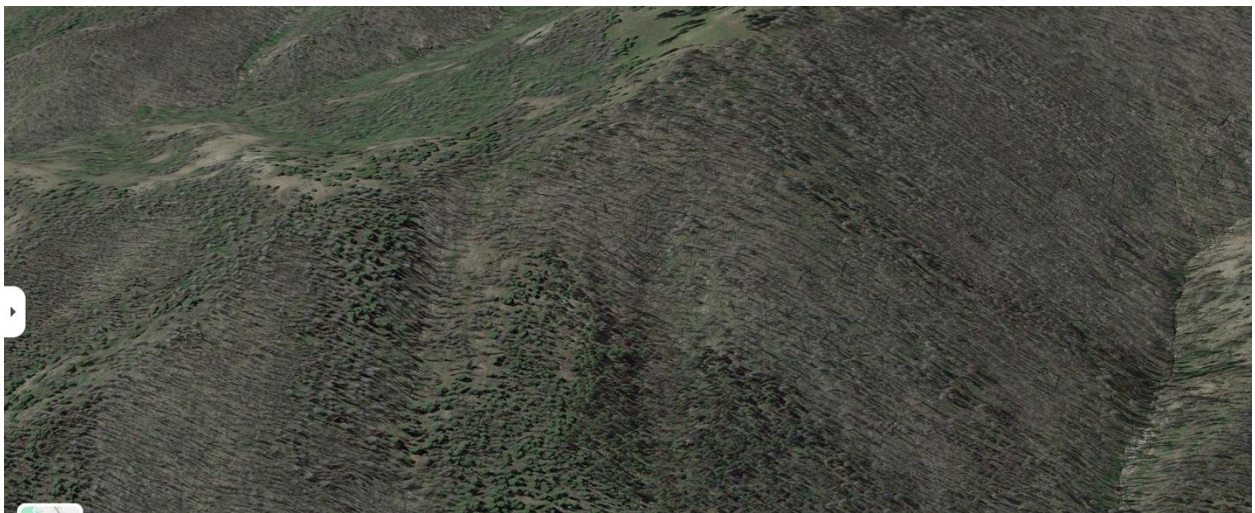


June 20th, 2016

4. Smoky Mountain Roadless Area
304,000 acres in Sawtooth National Forest
Idaho's 2nd Congressional District- Mike Simpson (R)
Beaver Creek Fire (2013)

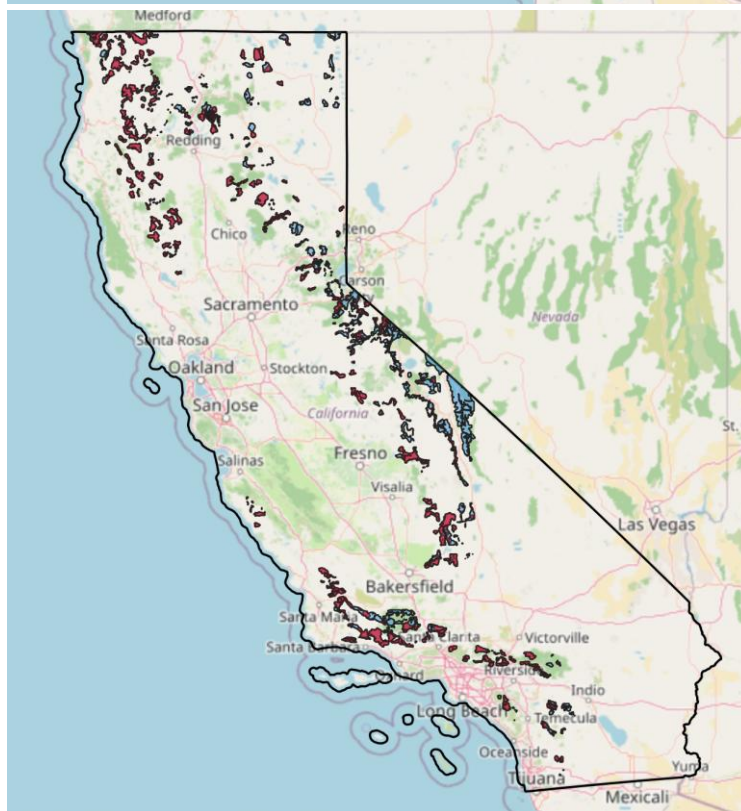
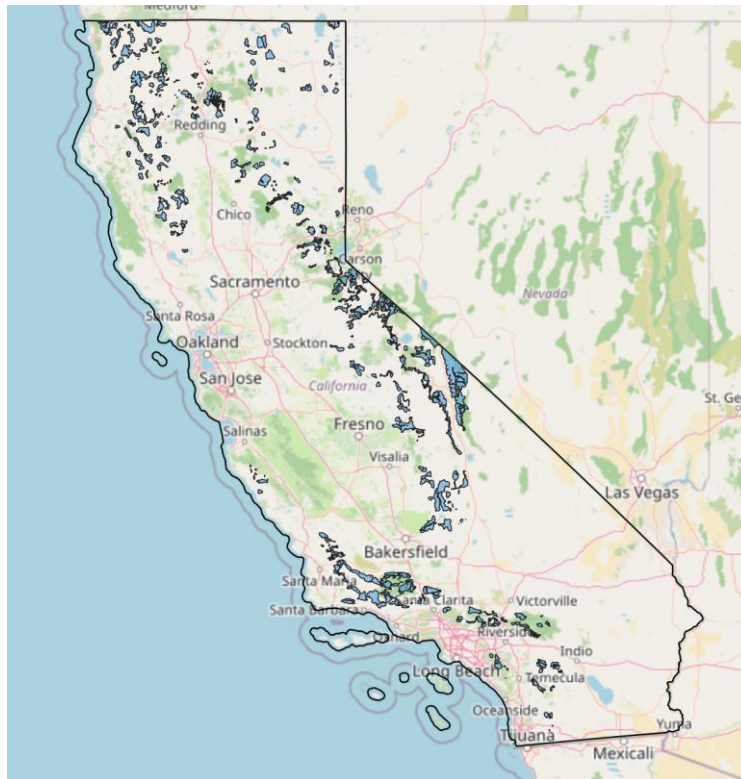


July 21st, 2013



July 2nd, 2016

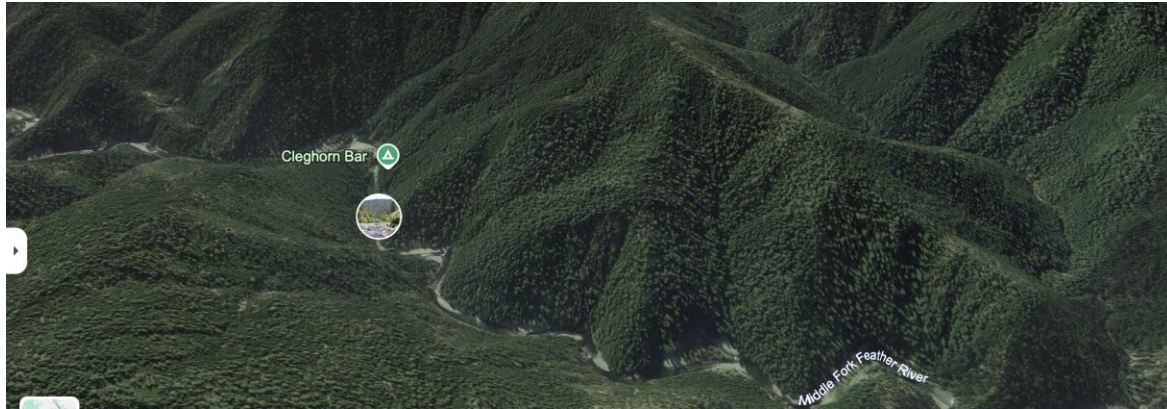
California



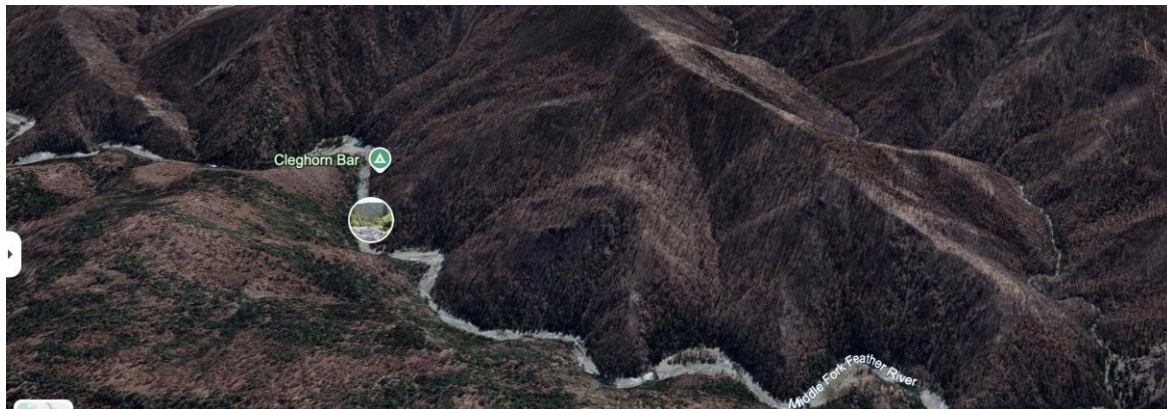
Figures 11+12

California Roadless Area Examples

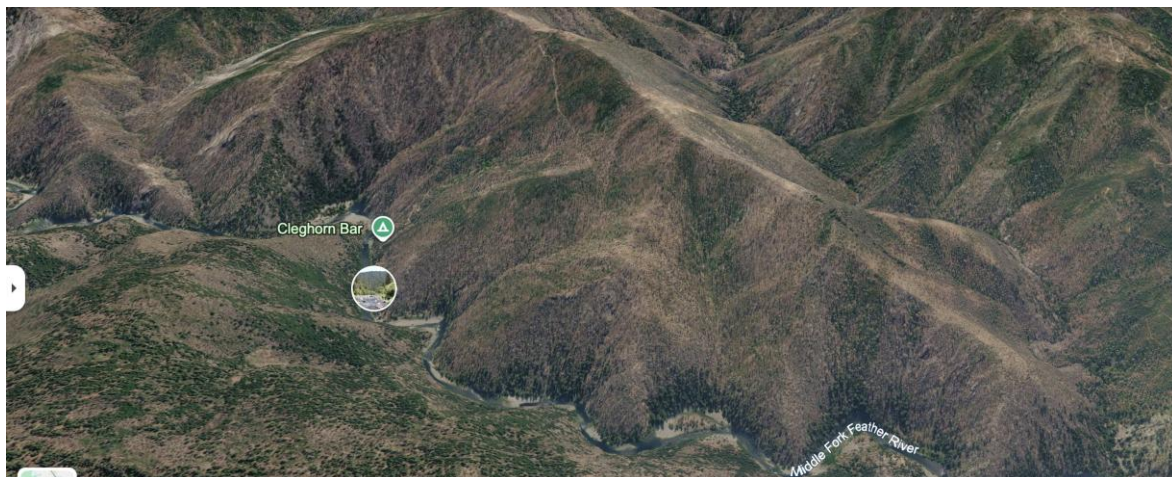
1. Middle Fork Feather River Inventoried Roadless Area
29,300 acres in Plumas National Forest
Californias 1st Congressional District (R)
North Complex Fire 2020



June 30th, 2018



April 30th, 2021



Present Day [Google Earth](#)

2. Dry Lake Inventoried Roadless Area

17,048 acres in Los Padres National Forest

California's 24th Congressional District- Salud Carbajal (D)

Thomas Fire, 2017



April 30th, 2017



December 31st, 2017



Present Day [Google Earth](#)

3. Butt Mountain Roadless Area

8,600 acres in Plumas and Lassen National Forest

Dixie Fire (2021)

Californias 1st Congressional District- James Gallagher (R)



October 30th, 2019



July 30th, 2022



Present Day [Google Earth](#)

4. Kangaroo Roadless Area

90,000 acres in Klamath National Forest

California's 1st Congressional District- James Gallagher (R)

Cedar Fire (2017)



July 30th, 2017

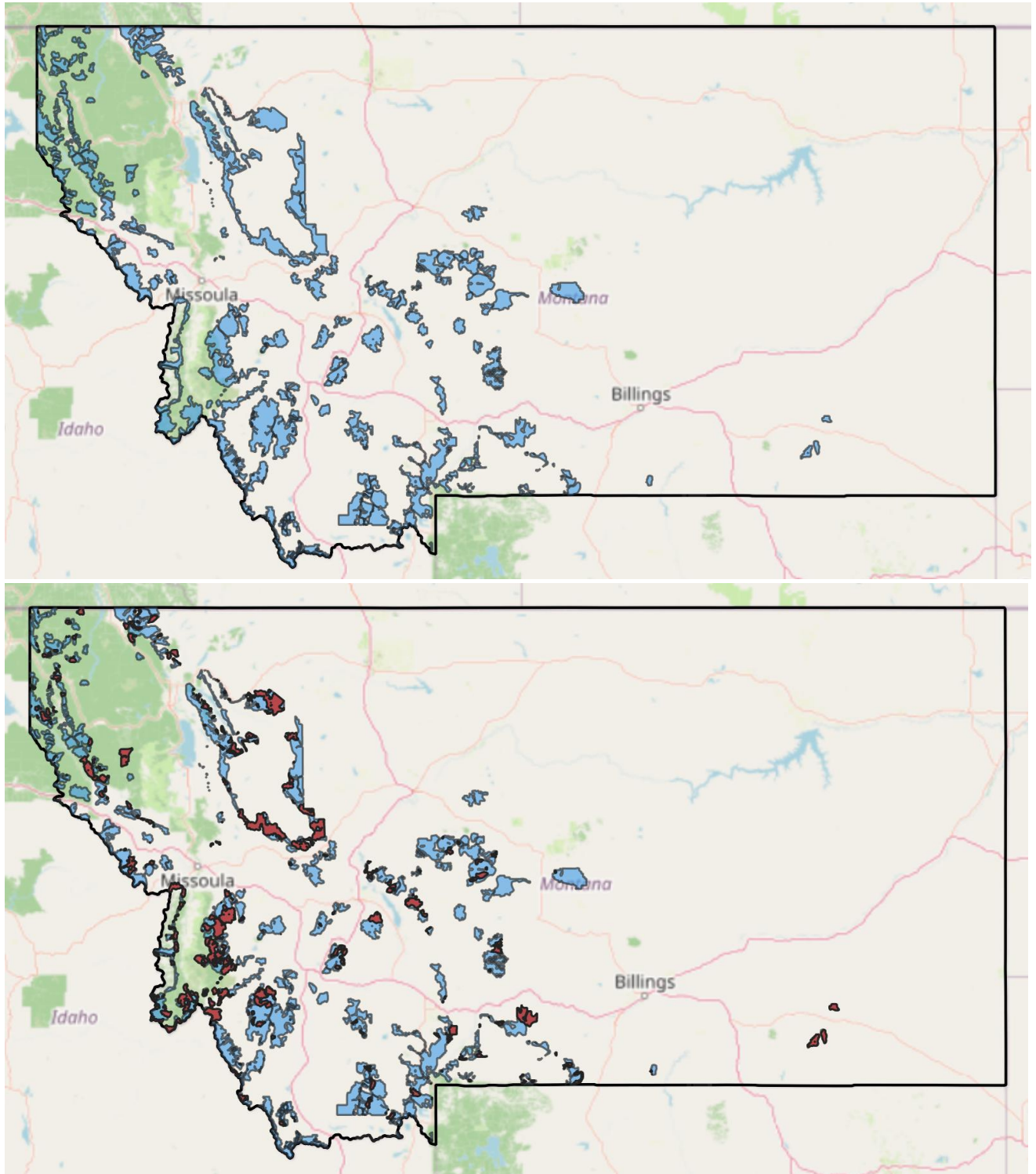


June 30th, 2018 [Google Earth](#)



June 30th, 2022

Montana



Figures 13+14: Montana Specific IRA map and Montana Specific IRA and burn severity intersection

1. Lolo Creek Roadless Area

17,500 acres in Lolo National Forest

Lolo Peak Fire (2017)

Montana's 1st Congressional District- Ryan Zinke (R)



July 23rd, 2013



August 4th, 2019



August 15th, 2022 [Google Earth](#)

2. West Pioneer Roadless Area

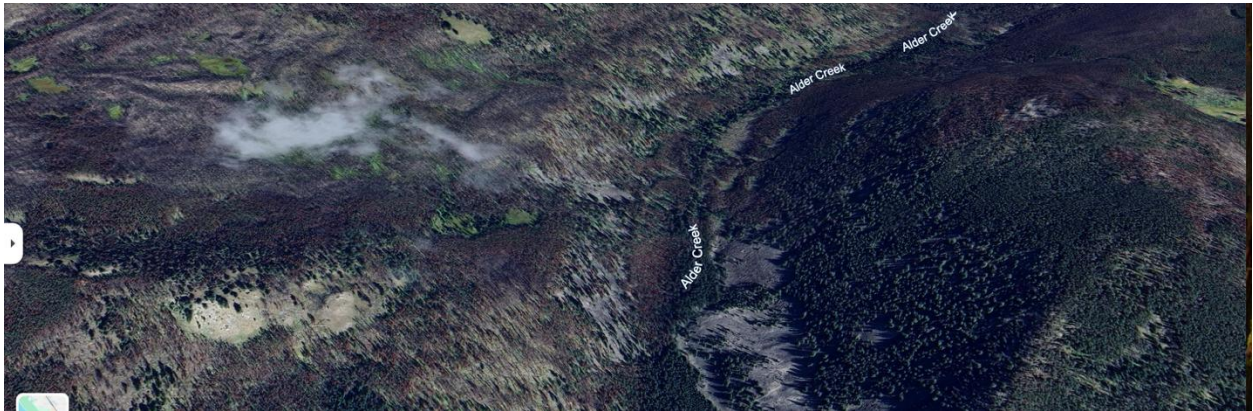
148,150 acres in Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest

Montana's 1st Congressional District- Ryan Zinke (R)

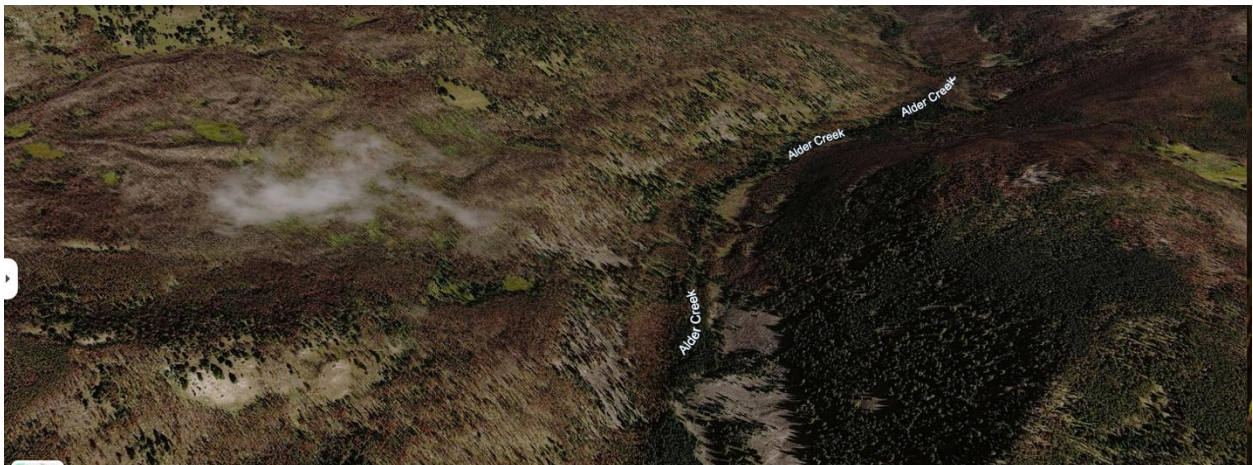
Alder Creek Fire (2021)



October 2nd, 2020



September 14th, 2023

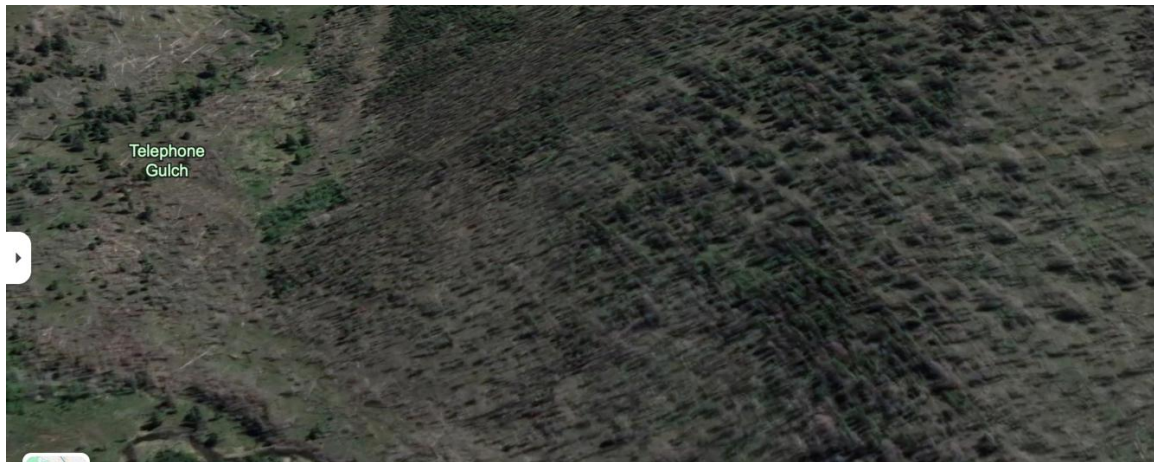


Present Day [Google Earth](#)

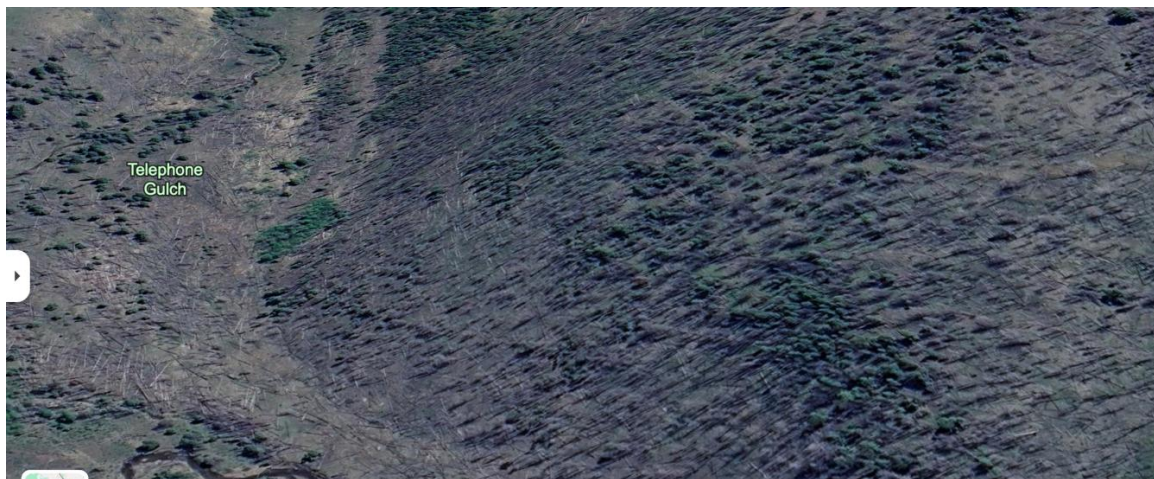
3. Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan Roadless Area
361,000 acres in Lewis and Clark, Helena National Forest
Montana's 1st Congressional District- Ryan Zinke (R)
Alice Creek Fire (2017)



July 10th, 2014

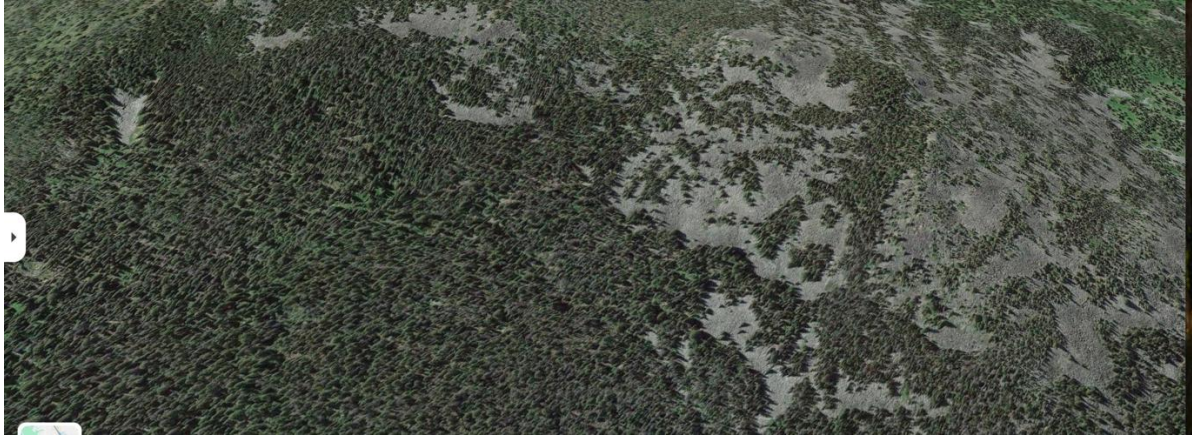


June 17th, 2022

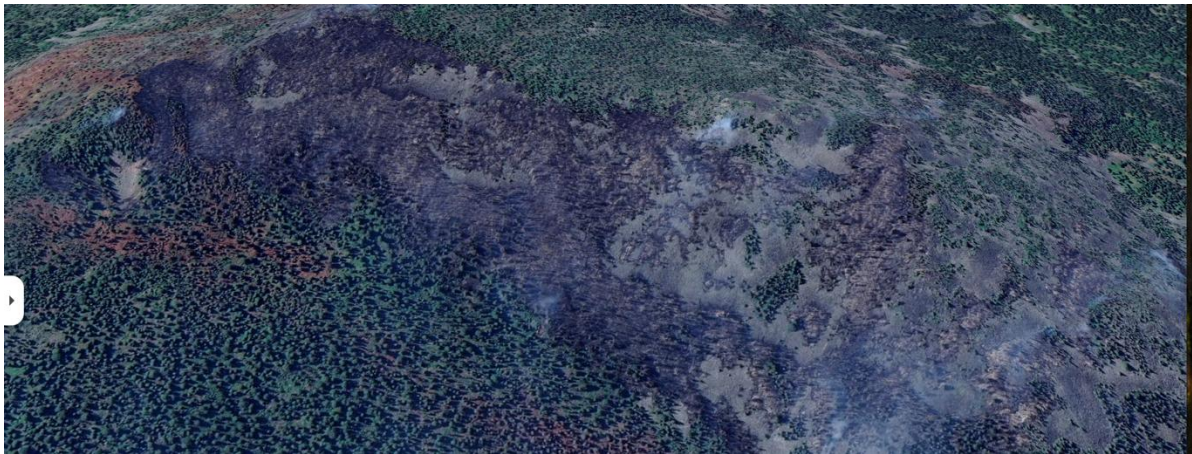


May 30th, 2025

4. Jericho Mountain Roadless Area
8,900 acres in Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest
Montana's 2nd Congressional District- Troy Downing (R)
Jericho Mountain Fire (2025)



July 26th, 2014

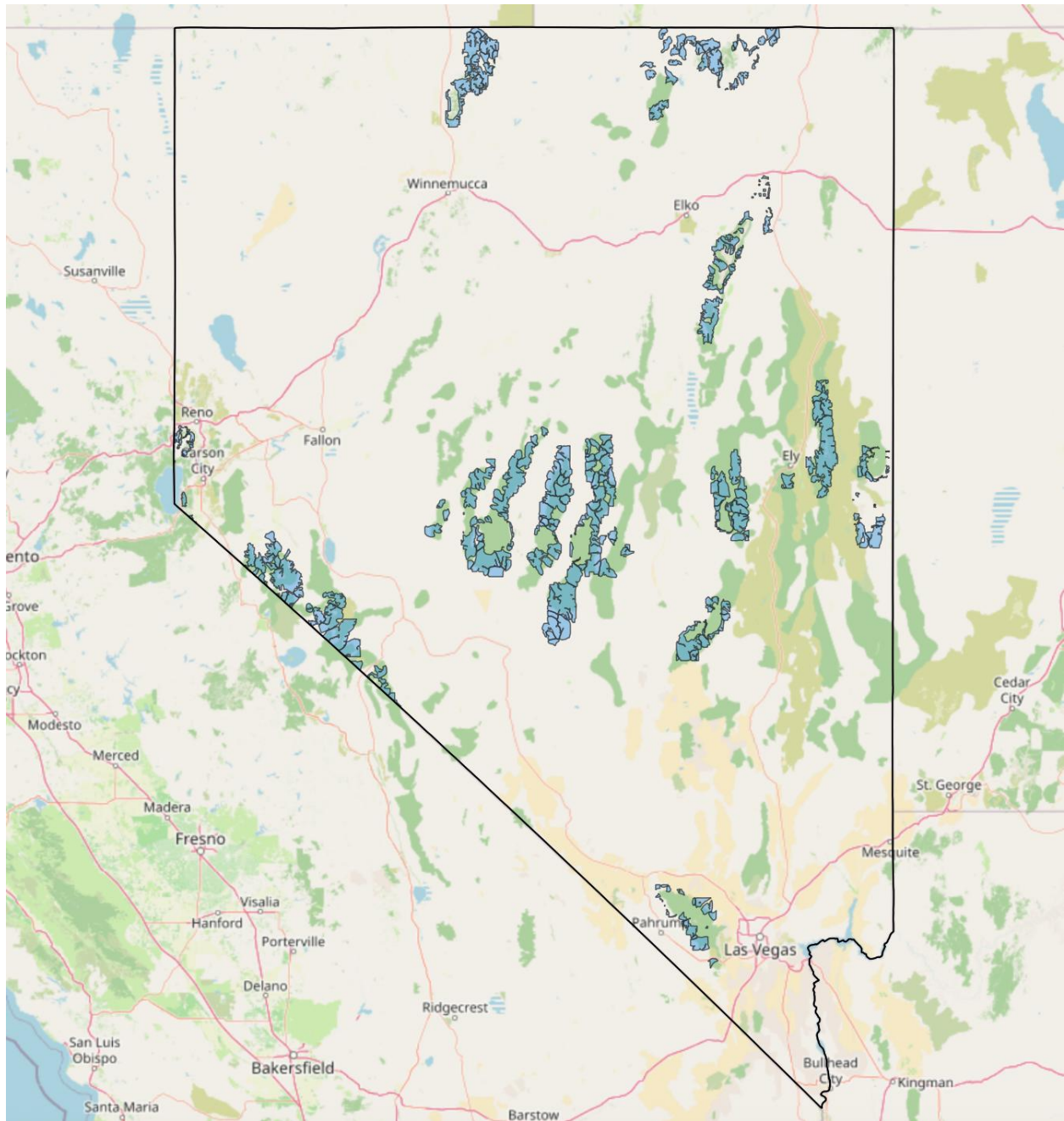


June 17th, 2025



Present Day [Google Earth](#)

Nevada



Fire 16: Nevada specific IRA

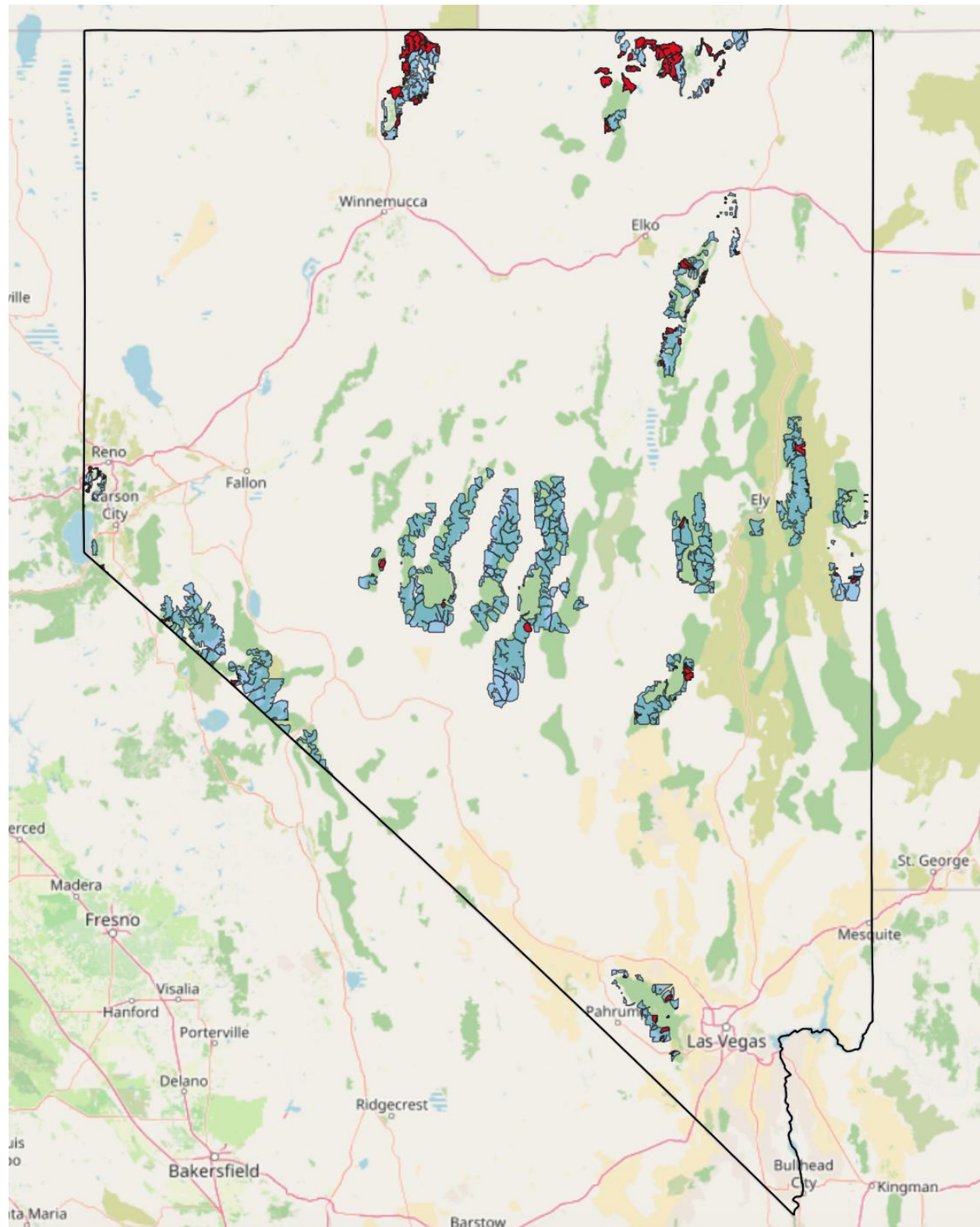


Figure 17: Nevada Specific Burn intersection

1. Ruby-Lamoille Canyon Roadless Area
92,652 acres in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Range Two Fire 2018
2nd Congressional District- Mark Amodei (R)



April 10th, 2014



September 5th, 2021 [Google Earth](#)

2. Charleston-Carpenter Roadless Area

Carpenter One Fire (2013)

Nevadas 3rd Congressional District- Susie Lee (D)

17,828 acres in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest



June 14th, 2013



September 9th, 2016 [Google Earth](#)

Section III: Step-by-Step Guide to Creating the Maps

1. Download QGIS-LTR free mapping software to your computer, create a new project
2. Click the CRS in the bottom right corner and make sure your map is set to EPSG:5070, and select NAD83/ Conus Albers (this makes sure the scale is correct and focuses on the United States)
3. Add a basemap by clicking the XYZ tiles in the browser panel and select OpenStreetMap, which should bring up a world map
4. Next, download the data files that you want to overlay. For these maps download the USFS Roadless Areas: 2001 Roadless rule shapefiles [datasets.php](#), as well as the Monitoring Trends and Burn Severity dataset (for these maps we only used the data post 2001- after the roadless rule was put into effect) <https://burnseverity.cr.usgs.gov/direct-download>, and the Census state boundaries [Census Data](#)
5. In QGIS, add a vector layer to the map base, choosing the .shp file from the download (do this for both the roadless area layer and the burn trends layer)
6. Note: to change any of the colors/opacity of the layers, go to Properties
7. To fix the geometries, open the Processing Toolbox, click Fix Geometries, and select one layer at a time (this preps the layers to be processed)
8. To find the intersection, open Processing Toolbox and select Intersection between the Fire Data and Roadless Areas; this shows where fires have occurred specifically in roadless Areas
9. You can now choose to turn on or off any layers that you want (for example, if you only want to show the intersection of roadless areas and fires, you have to turn off the base fire layer)
10. To make a map for a particular state, first open the attribute table for the state boundaries layer and enter "STUSPS" = "OR" or whatever the state abbreviation would be. Click Select Features and close the table.
11. Go to the Processing Toolbox and select the clip tool, then select the state background as the input layer and the roadless area as the output layer. Now you have only the roadless areas that are within the state boundaries.
12. Repeat that step with the fire intersection.
13. Repeat for any other states that you are interested in, making sure to save your project as you are going

Steps to capturing Google Earth Data

1. Find the geographical area you are interested in, using either geographical coordinates or by mapping to a particular location in the roadless area (like a mountain, river, or stream).
2. Next, click the 3D button on the bottom right to see the topography of the area
3. On the top toolbar, click the show historical imagery button, and then toggle to the year you want to see.
4. For this Memorandum, I often knew what year the fire I was looking for was, and would look at that time to see the effects on the landscape.
5. Screenshot the desired time period

