

Petition to Rezone Butte Creek Ranch to Timber Production Zone

For:
Cottrell Ranch LLC
P.O. Box 399
Fortuna, CA 95540

Prepared by:

Chris Carroll
Registered Professional Forester #2628

Chris Carroll

Date

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165 South Fortuna Boulevard, Fortuna, CA 95540
707-725-1897 • fax 707-725-0972
trc@timberlandresource.com

Butte Creek Ranch

ZONING RECLASSIFICATION

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1. Property Owner

Cottrell Ranch, LLC
P.O. Box 399
Fortuna, CA 95540

2. Project Purpose and Description

The project involves Zone Reclassification pursuant to C.G.C. 51113.5. Currently, the property is mixed zoned as Agriculture Exclusive (1,504 acres), Timber Production Zone (1,580 acres) and Unclassified (53 acres). This project proposes the rezoning of the Agriculture Exclusive (AE) and Unclassified (U) land to Timber Production Zone (TPZ) land to better reflect the actual land uses occurring on the ownership (past and present).

3. Present Plan Designation

The project area has the following plan designations: Agriculture, Grazing, Timberland.

4. Present Zoning Designation

The project area has the following zoning designations: Agriculture Exclusive (160 minimum parcel size) and Timber Production Zone (160 minimum parcel size).

5. Legal Description

The Butte Creek Ranch is located approximately 7 miles east of Bridgeville, CA in portions of Section 25 & 36, T1N, R4E, Section 19, 30, 31 & 32, T1N, R5E, Section 1, T1S, R4E, & Section 6, T1S, R5E, HB&M, Humboldt County. The project area is located on the Larabee Valley 7.5' USGS Quadrangle. The project area is approximately 3.137 acres in size and extends geographically from Butte Creek along the west to the Little Van Duzen River to the east.

6. Rezoning Justification

California Government Code Section 51113.5: This section allows a property owner with TP-zoned land to petition the County to rezone *contiguous* land not zoned TP to the TP zone. The only requirements for this type of rezoning are that the parcels must meet the definitions of Government Code Section 51104(f), (g) and (h)¹. The County may not place any additional requirements on this petition to rezone the property to TP.

¹Government Code Section 51104

(f) "Timberland" means privately owned land, or land acquired for state forest purposes, which devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, and which is capable of growing an average annual volume of wood fiber of at least 15 cubic feet per acre.

(g) "Timberland production zone" or "TPZ" means an area which has been zoned pursuant to Section 51112 and 51113 and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, as defined in subdivision (h).

(h) "Compatible use" is any use which does not significantly detract from the use of the property for, or inhibit, growing and harvesting timber, and shall include, but not be limited to, any of the following, unless in a specific instance such a use would be contrary to the preceding definition of compatible use"

- Management for watershed
- Management for fish and wildlife habitat
- A use integrally related to the growing, harvesting and processing of forest precuts, including but not limited to roads, log landings, and log storage areas.
- The erection, construction, alteration, or maintenance of gas, electric, water, or communication transmission facilities.

- Grazing
- A residence or other structure necessary for the management of land zoned as timberland production.

Discussion of California Government Code Section 51113.5: All areas proposed to be rezoned to TPZ are contiguous lands contained within the Butte Creek Ranch and owned by the Cottrell LLC.

The project area meets the definitions of Government Code Section 51104(f), “Timberland”, “Timberland Production Zone” and “Compatible Use”. The property has historically been managed for timber production and grazing and compatible uses including management for watershed resources, fish and wildlife habitat, and uses integrally related to the growing, harvesting and processing of forest products. Numerous Timber Harvest Plans have been filed on the property, including over the areas zoned AE and U.

Discussion of Photo and Field Review: The basis for determining compliance with Government Code Section 51113.5 was determined by using available aerial photos, soil maps and on-site inspection of the project area. Historic aerial photos (1947, 1968, 1972, 1993, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2022) were evaluated for past management and vegetation conditions. Initial timber harvests took place in the mid 1960s. This is evidenced by the fresh cuts on the landscape, roads, skid trails and landings. Additional harvests appear to have occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. Another distinguishable feature from the historic photographs (1947, 1968) was the more open nature of the landscape as whole; larger meadows and grasslands, and apparent sparse woodlands. It is apparent that early harvests did target scattered Douglas-fir within the woodlands, and this practice likely accelerated the encroachment already occurring. At present, the majority of oak woodlands that once existed on the property have transitioned into Douglas-fir dominated conifer stands.

The project area was visited throughout 2023 and 2024 for the development of a Forest Management Plan covering the Ranch. It was noted that many of the areas zoned AE and U are stocked timberlands and woodlands. Some of them contain mature stands of timber. Areas that are grasslands, or woodlands, have significant conifer encroachment. Photographs of these areas are included below. Woodland edges contained the highest degree of Douglas-fir in-growth, with up to 600 trees per acre occupying intermediate and codominate canopy positions.

Discussion of Project Area Soils: Soils are a major factor in determining the suitability of land for timber production. The Web Soil Survey, National Cooperative Soil Survey was queried on November 9, 2023, and the results are attached below. In general, these soil types share similar characteristics—they are underlain by sandstone, mudstone, shale, or schist; occur frequently on hilly to steep topographies; have a loam or clay loam surface texture with gravelly loam or clay loam subsoil texture; are mostly moderately to well drained; and have a moderate potential for erosion hazard. Site Class ranges from Site Class III to IV. The full soil report is contained within, Appendix A.

Table 1: Butte Creek Ranch Soil Types

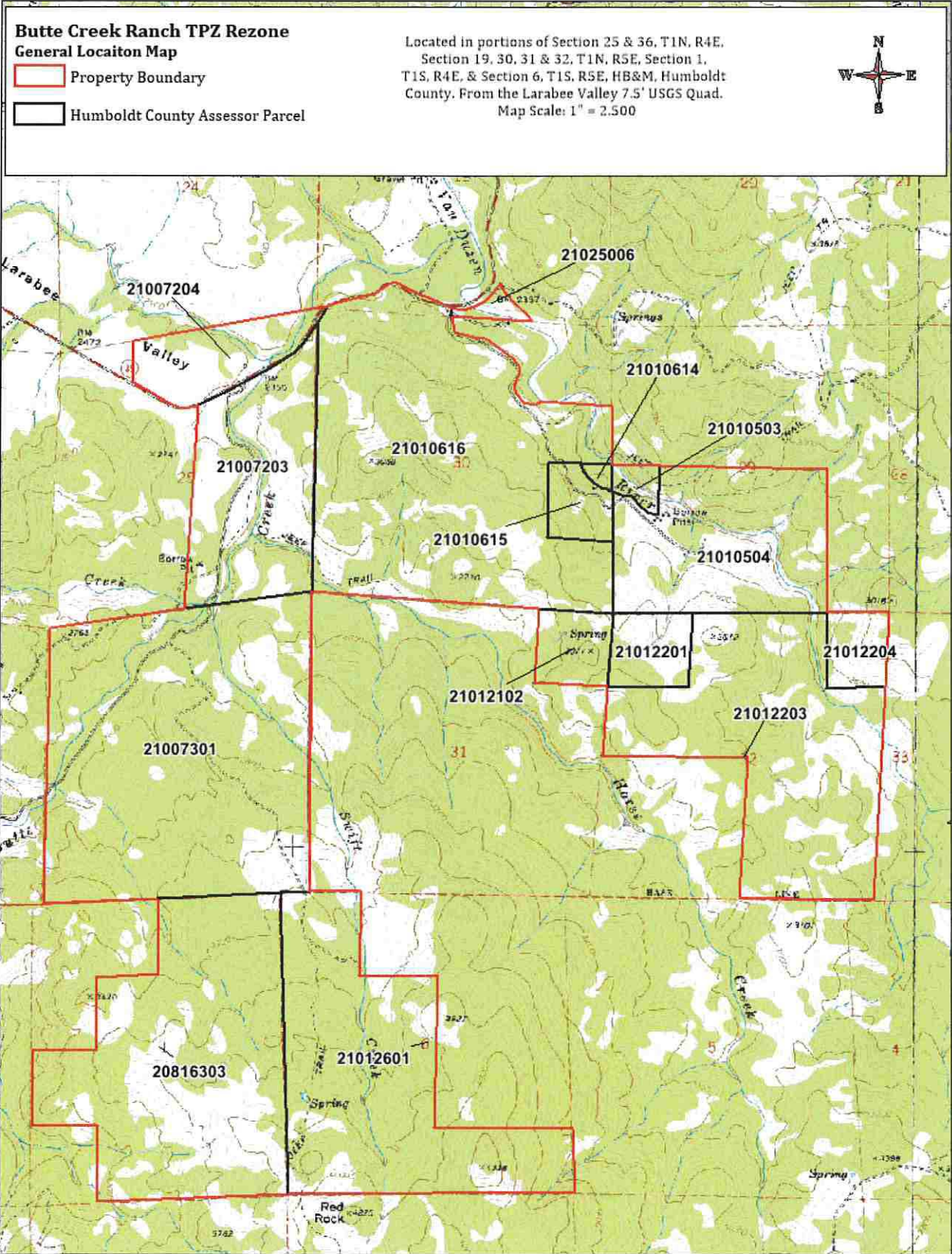
Soil Name	Acres
Chalkmountain-Tannin complex	19
Fluvents	7
Frostvalley	15
Frostvalley-Mulecreek complex	10
Highyork-Elkcamp-Airstrip complex	117
Pasturerock-Coyoterock-Maneze complex	474
Rockyglen-Hollowtree-Rock outcrop complex	1,468
Rockyglen-Tannin complex	479
Tannin-Burgsblock-Rockyglen complex	548

Current and Future Timber Management: A Forest Management Plan is in development on the property as part of a Conservation Easement that is being granted by CALFIRE. This management plan forecasts periodic harvesting within a thirty year planning horizon. These harvests are to be implemented under Timber Harvest Plans and/or various exemptions through CALFIRE. Oak woodlands where they exist are planned for oak woodland management to restore and enhance these natural habitats. Additionally, portions of the Butte Creek Ranch have been included in a CALFIRE Forest Health Grant proposal in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management and Buck Mountain Ranch, which if granted would include approximately 1,200 acres of forest stand improvement treatments, fuel breaks, and oak restoration on the property.

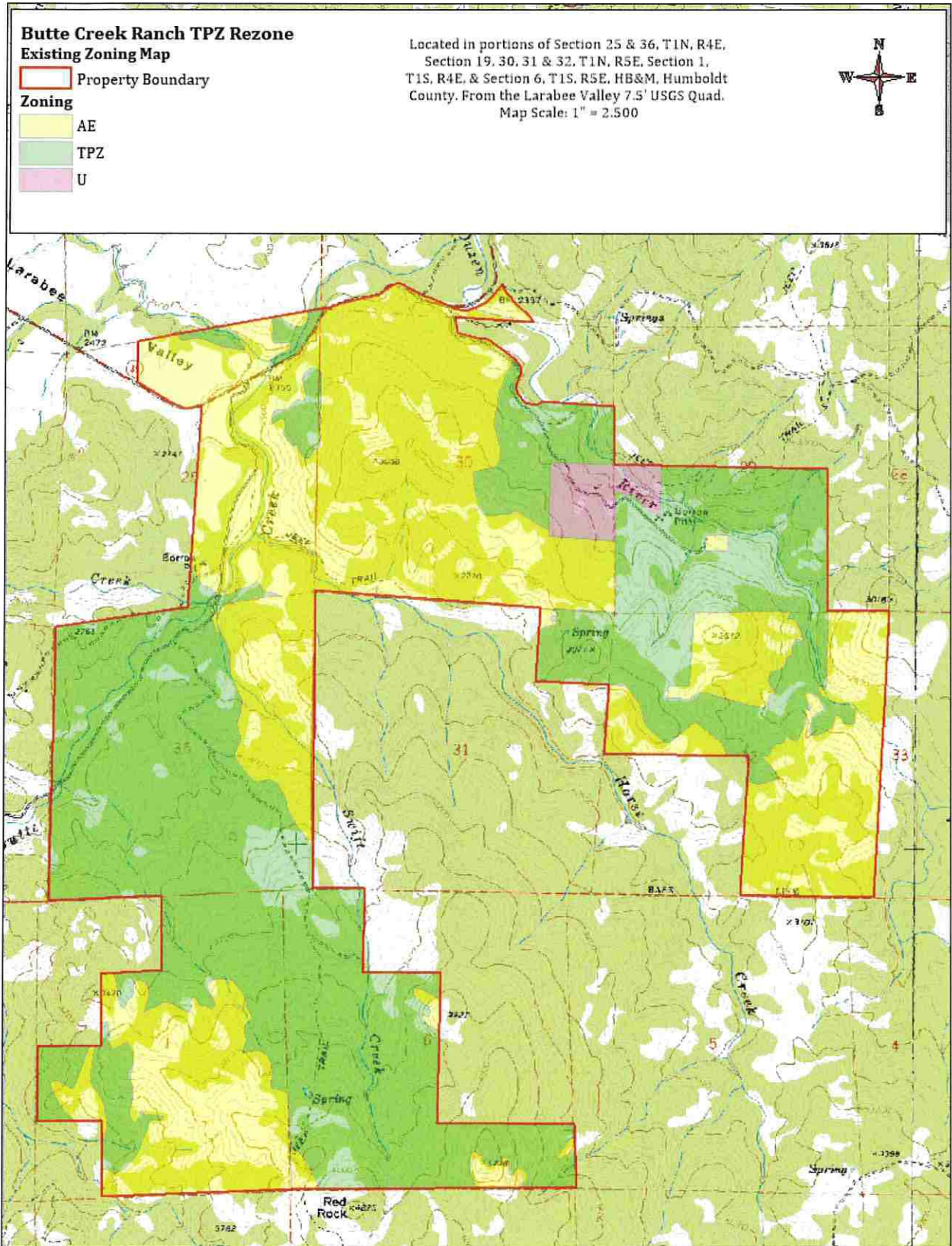
7. Conclusion

The property meets all of the requirements detailed in C.G.C. 51113.5 to be rezoned into Timber Production Zone. The non-TPZ lands that are currently forested are already stocked as per the Forest Practice Rules producing over 15 square feet of wood fiber annually. The non-TPZ lands that are currently grassland are becoming encroached upon by early and mid successional tree species and have been determined to be capable of producing at least 15 square feet of wood fiber per acre annually.

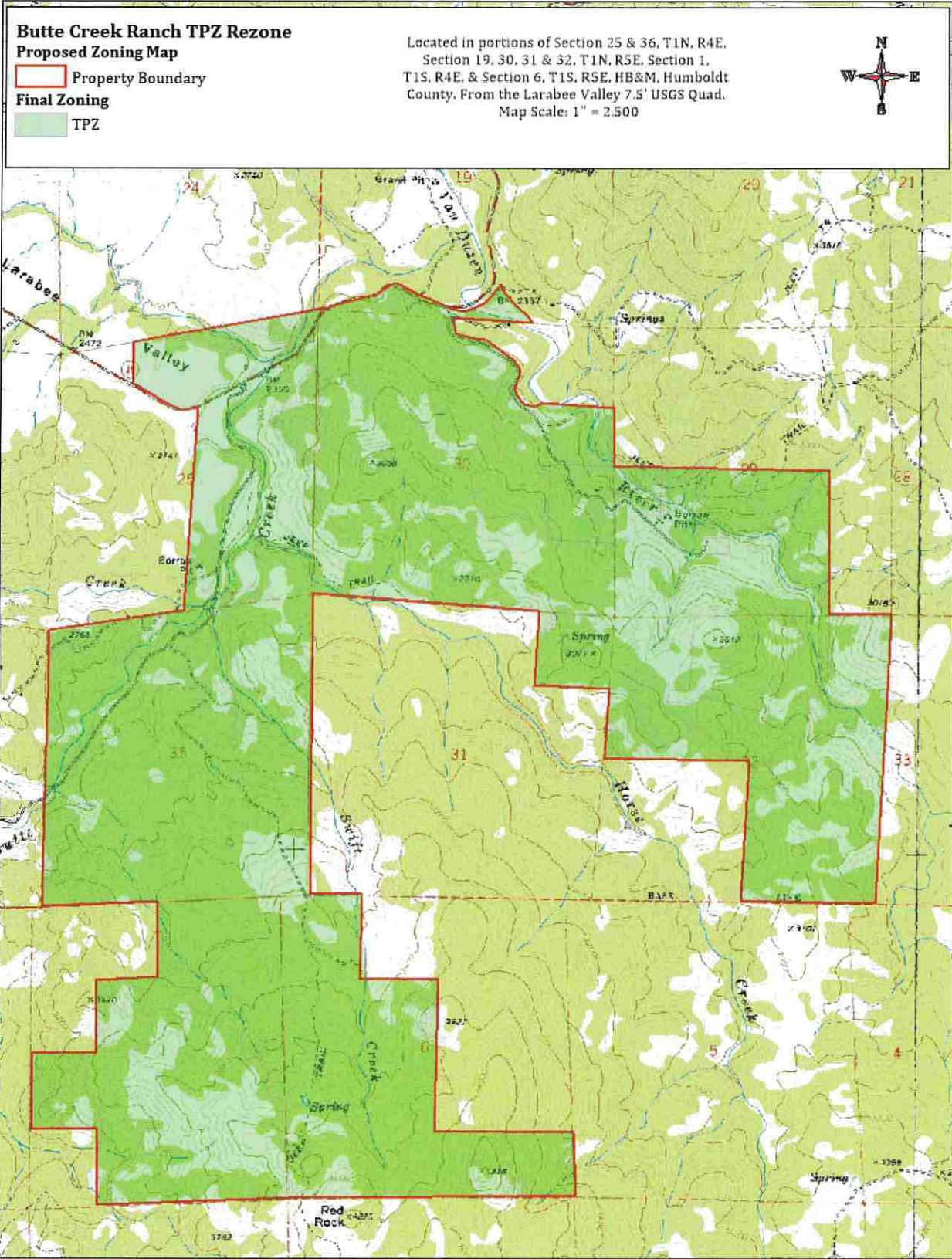
General Location Map



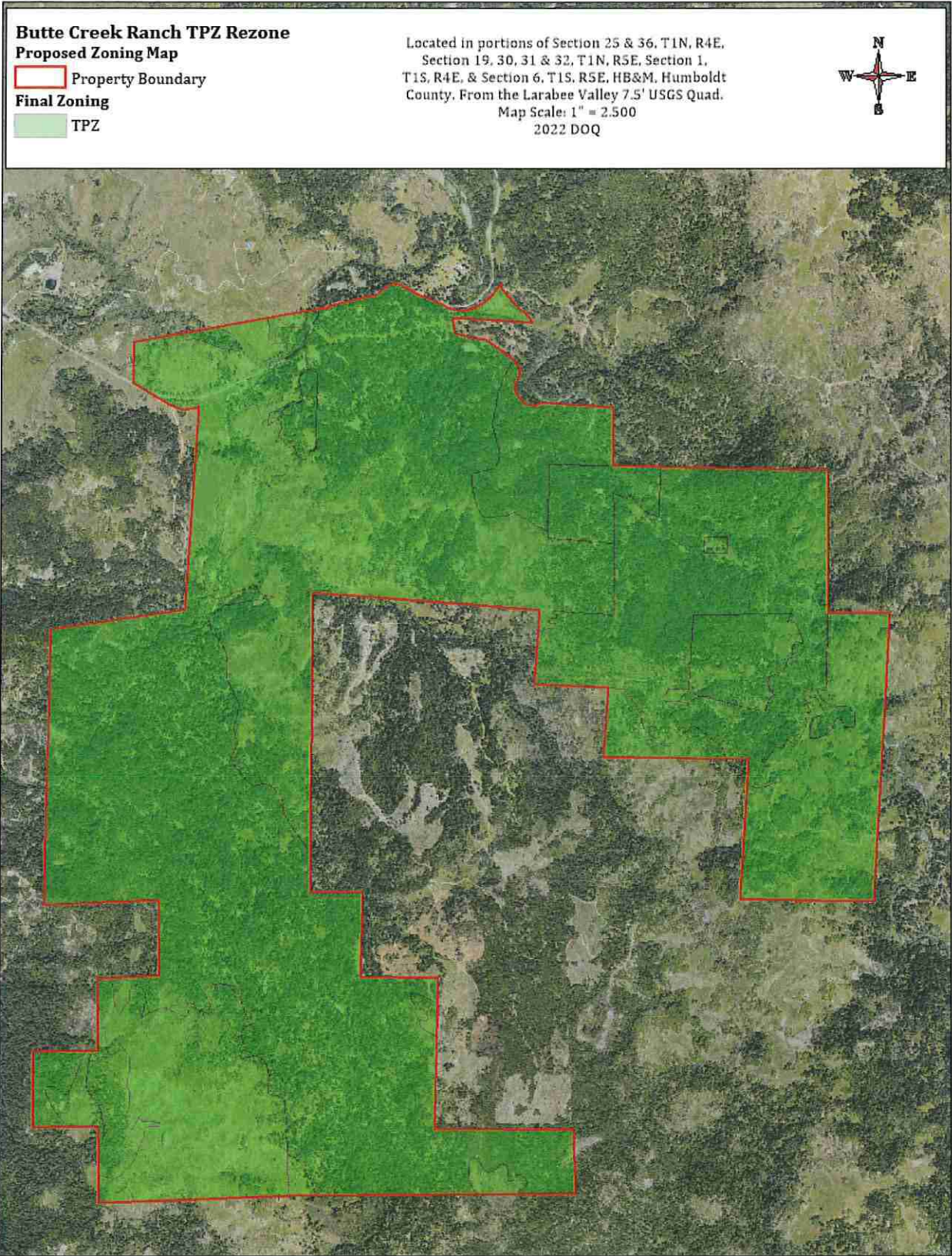
Existing Zoning Map



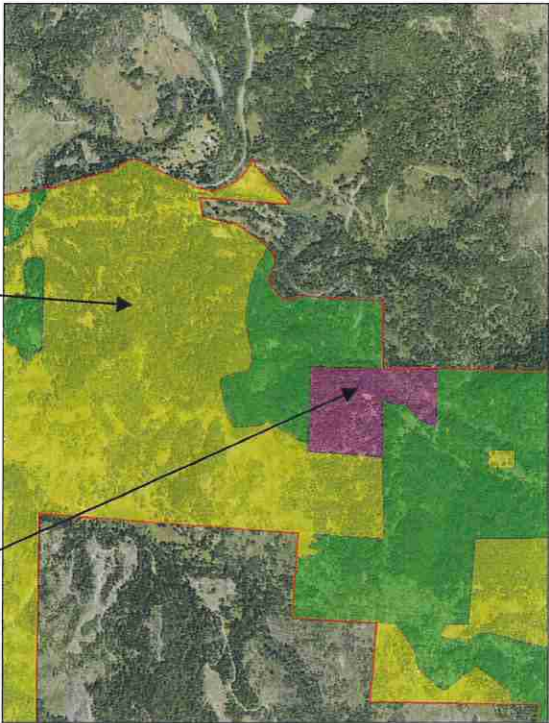
Proposed Zoning Map



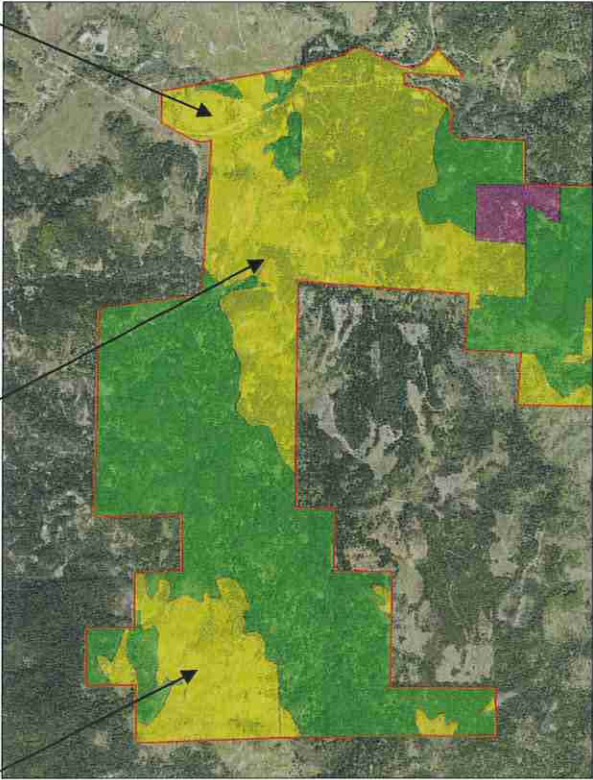
Proposed Zoning Map (DOQ)



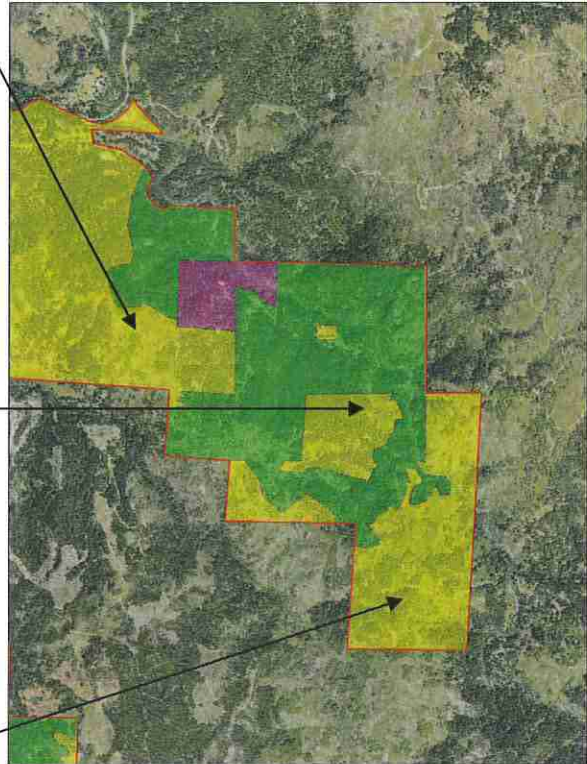
Pictures



Examples of existing timberland within the AE zoned areas of the property. Areas depicted within the photos are meeting the stocking requirements of CCR 912.7.



Examples of conifer encroachment occurring on the edges of woodlands and within the grasslands.



More examples of timberland within AE zoned areas and conifer encroachment occurring within woodlands and within the grasslands.

Appendix A - Soil Report