

Utah Forestry, Fire & State Lands / Iron County

Brian Head Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention

Project Proposal

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Introduction

Brian Head is located in Southwest Utah along state route 143 in east central Iron County. At an elevation of 9,500', Brian Head is a premier resort nestled in color countries red rock. Next to Cedar Breaks National Monument, and towering above Cedar City and Parowan, Brian Head is an outdoor enthusiasts dream. With visitors coming from all around the world for a glimpse of the amazing views, ski slopes, hiking trails, and mountain biking, Brian Head has become a vacation destination for all. With a 5 star resort and accommodations to match, it welcomes anyone who has a desire of the outdoors or who just wants to kick back and relax.

Amidst all of this beauty, lays a sleeping catastrophe. Though fire occurrence is low, the potential for a landscape altering event capable of annihilating the community is a reality. For decades firefighters have battled blazes in Southwest Utah creating unbalance in our forested areas. As populations grow and developments move into the wildland urban interface areas, the threat of major catastrophic events are escalated.

Utilizing the following categories: High Value Resources & Assessments, Community Protection, and Fire Management Capacity & Capability; we obtained relevant information to successfully meet project goals.

High Value Resources & Assessments

- **Human Life:** Public safety is the number one concern within the project area. The transient population is regularly over 10,000 and consists of a wide variation of visitors from outdoor enthusiast to families. Visitors range from locals to outside foreign countries, all visiting the area to take in national parks and recreation activities.
- **Built Infrastructure:** Brian Head is primarily made up of commercial property with an emphasis on multifamily units, shopping, and dining establishments. Other infrastructure consist of municipal water systems, power transmission, ski lifts, snow making equipment, highway, roadways, trails and byways.
- **Municipal Watershed:** Brian Head prides itself on their water system; they utilize an un-chlorinated water supply that is naturally spring fed with a naturally recharging aquifer. Damage to the watershed would devastate this system and require irreversible ongoing use of chlorinators in the culinary water system.
- **Area Managed for Timber or Forage Production:** The community and surrounding area is rich in timber and forage products. Most of the large scale fuels reduction and the removal of material to establish ski runs was done utilizing logging practices. The harvested material is utilized for local construction and building products. There are still some isolated pockets of harvestable material within the proposed area.
- **Important Fish and Wildlife Habitats:** There are transient water protection zones, retardant avoidance areas, and several streams and ponds with fish bearing watersheds. The community is in the process of constructing a \$3.5 million dollar community water restoration project that will provide 19.5 million gallons of water during the summer months and will be available for fire

suppression. After which the water will be released downstream to provide late season irrigation for agricultural use in the Parowan valley.

- **Areas of Agricultural Production:** The community supports livestock range and encourages multi land use between wildlife and agriculture. Sheep, cattle, and goats have played an important role in the natural mitigation of grasses and shrubs within the project area. Deer, elk, mountain lions, bear and other large and small game have also played an important role in the ecosystem in and around the project area. Brian Head wants to encourage and support the wildlife continuing the utilization of agriculture to assist with the balance of grasses and shrubs.
- **Developed Recreation Areas:** The community is an all season resort priding itself as a premier outdoor playground. At over 9,500' in base elevation it is the highest resort in Utah attracting skiers, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, hikers, and other outdoor enthusiasts.
- **Other Economic Drivers:** Iron County relies on the community for tourism bolstering economics and providing nearly 1/3 of the tax revenue. Events such as the Larry H. Miller Tour of Utah, Red Rock Relay, Thunder on the Mountain Motorcycle Rally, Snowmobile races and events, and various ski and snowboard events all boosting revenues to Iron County and the state of Utah.

Acres To Be Treated: 8,875.71

Importance: High

Likelihood of Threat: See GIS shape file and attached maps of the project area.

Action to Mitigate Threat: Mitigate fuels in and around the community through a combination of timber harvest, prescribed fire, grazing, and mechanical treatments. Taking into consideration safety of the crews performing the work, likeliness of success, threatened and endangered species, minimizing community impacts and maximizing aesthetics.

-Responsibilities of Implementation: Collaborative efforts between the town of Brian Head, Iron County, State of Utah, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service.

-Priorities: High.

-Cost: \$10.7 Million \$40,000 annually for project maintenance

-Maintenance Plan: Annual maintenance to include thinning, grazing and prescribed fire

Community Protection

- **Education & Outreach:** The Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code was adopted by ordinance and has been enforced by code officials since 2006. Active Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was implemented in 2003. Updates and reviews are ongoing with project accomplishments and updated goals being reviewed annually.
- **WUI Fuels Treatments:** Mechanical, to include logging and fuel mitigation on individual lots and common areas. Prescribed fire has been utilized in common areas, along fuel breaks and

individual lots as conditions exist. Grazing within the community and adjacent properties where acceptable has also played a role in fuels mitigation and maintenance.

- **Public Safety Needs:** Brian Head Fire Department is currently in the process of obtaining a much needed water tender. With the extreme wildland urban interface threat to the community, the need for two additional wildland urban interface engines (type 3) and a ladder truck is high. Multi story multifamily dwellings on steep slopes utilizing ground ladders pose a high risk to fire personnel attempting rescue / evacuation in the event of a wildland urban interface event where escape routes may be cut off or impassable. Additional qualifications for fire personnel are being sought out in an attempt to further the wildland urban interface qualification base of the department. Recently the community funded a \$2.6 million public safety building adding a much needed training facility that can also be utilized as an emergency operation center. Due to the small base population of the community, additional staffing of the public safety department is needed. With additional staffing, fire prevention and fuels mitigation programs would be greatly enhanced improving overall safety of the community as well as bolstering the response to emergencies.
- **Fire Prevention Programs:** The Public Safety Department wants to continue the current fuel reduction program, with emphasis on individual property owner education and fuels mitigation. They also want to continue community landscape mitigation programs reducing fuels in large common areas and continue the enforcement of the adopted Utah Wildland Urban Interface Codes.
- **Evacuation Planning:** Continue to assess and re-evaluate the adopted Brian Head Town Emergency Response Plan that includes evacuation plans and protocols uniform with the Iron County Emergency Response Plan.
- **Ready-set-Go:** Continue public awareness and implementation of the Ready-Set-Go program. Review and assess policies relevant to the Ready-Set-Go program. Increase the awareness of visitors emphasizing the threat of wildfire to the community and surrounding area.

-Responsibility: Brian Head, Iron County, State of Utah, US Forest Service

-Priority: High

-Cost: \$3.5 Million

Fire Management Capacity & Capability

- **Volunteer Recruitment and Retention:** Supplemental benefit package. Local, state, and federal tax incentives.
- **Training:** Brian Head Public Safety has a very extensive training program for all aspects of the emergency services. Their program includes structural firefighting, hazardous material response, vehicle extrication, basic and advanced Emergency Medical Technician, law enforcement, wildland fire suppression, wildland urban interface operations and management. All public safety members are qualified at a minimum of basic wildland firefighter with a majority qualified at advanced levels including engine boss, initial and extended attack incident commander.

Additional training for the members of the department and town employees for emergency management is constantly being sought after.

- **Equipment:** Brian Head Fire Department maintains a fleet of fire apparatus that include 2 structural engines, 1 heavy wildland engine, and 1 light wildland engine.
- **Facilities:** Brian Head Fire Department operates out of a combined public safety facility located in the community and regularly hosts a variety of training inviting local, state, and federal resources at little or no cost to the agencies. Brian Head has led the municipal fire service in Southwest Utah for a number of years hosting events such as the Utah Wildland Engine Workshops, structural firefighting for high rise and multifamily dwellings, firefighter survival, wildland urban interface operations for rural fire departments, high angle rescue, and annual wildfire refreshers.

-Responsibility: Brian Head, Iron County, State of Utah

-Priority: High

-Cost: \$500,000 annually

Probability of Success: High

Community Support: High

Value: High

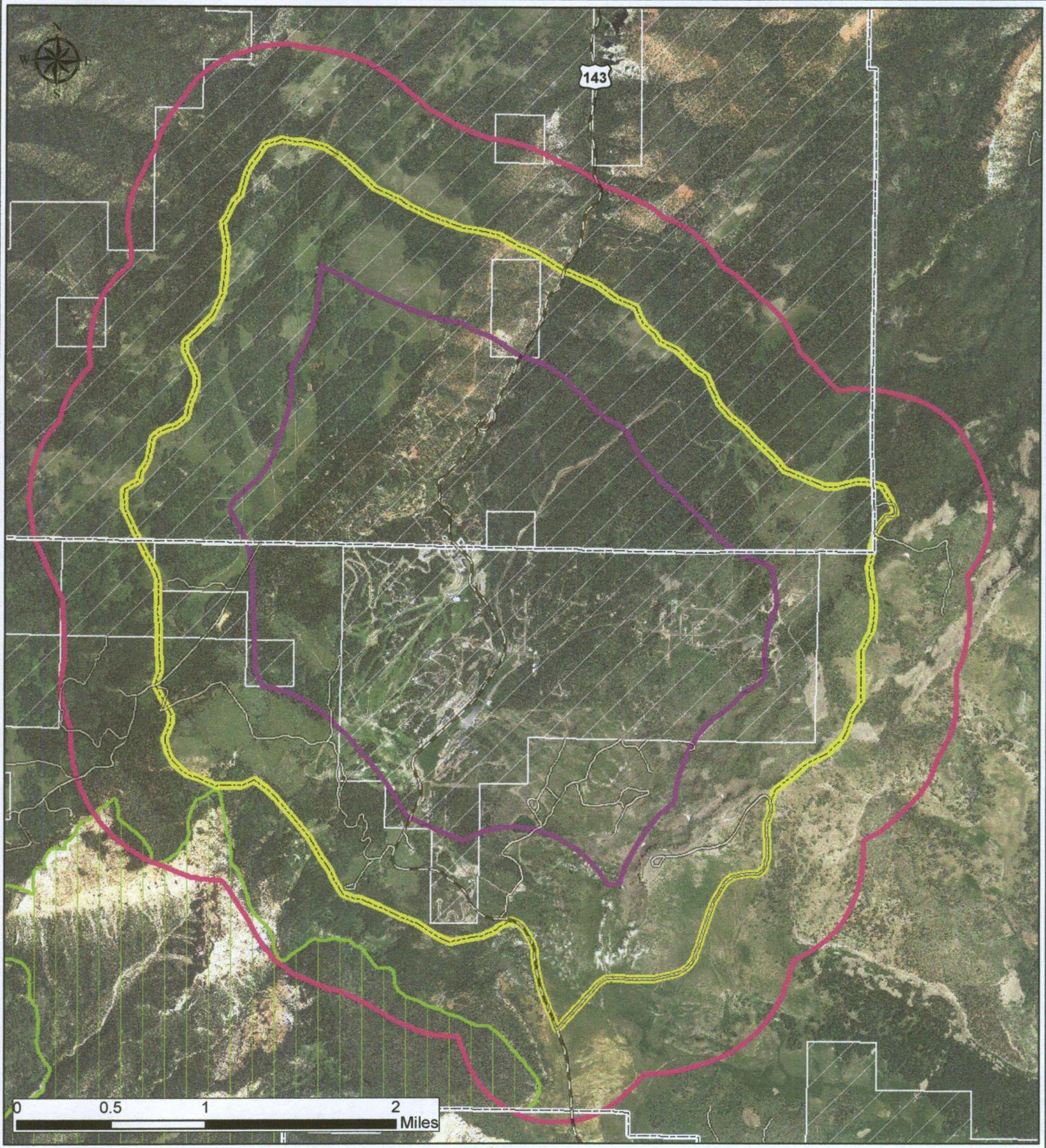
Summary:

With over 1,500 structures valued at over \$1.6 million dollars, the Brian Head area is worth attention. With an active Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the adoption of the Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code and Ready-Set-Go program it is evident that Brian Head is eager to protect their community and surrounding area.

The Brian Head Public Safety Department remains dedicated to protecting the area from all aspects of disaster. The dedication of the staff and desire to obtain further training and education is unsurpassed in the state. Even as funds are limited, the department continues to make advancements in equipment and facilities looking into the future development of the area and needs of the community.

In terms of economics, Brian Head and the surrounding area remains very important to the stability of Iron County. The increased tourism of the area stimulates the value of Southwest Utah and Iron County.

Barriers that we identified were small in terms of area however, they did exist. The treatment included a US Forest Service wilderness area that we would ask for congressional exemption for treatment. There are some threatened and endangered species in the area that were identified and will have to be addressed. Some legislative action and or policy changes were identified that need review in terms of volunteer incentives and benefits. Additional funding alternatives aiding private land and incorporated communities are needed with an emphasis in prevention, fuels mitigation and suppression efforts.



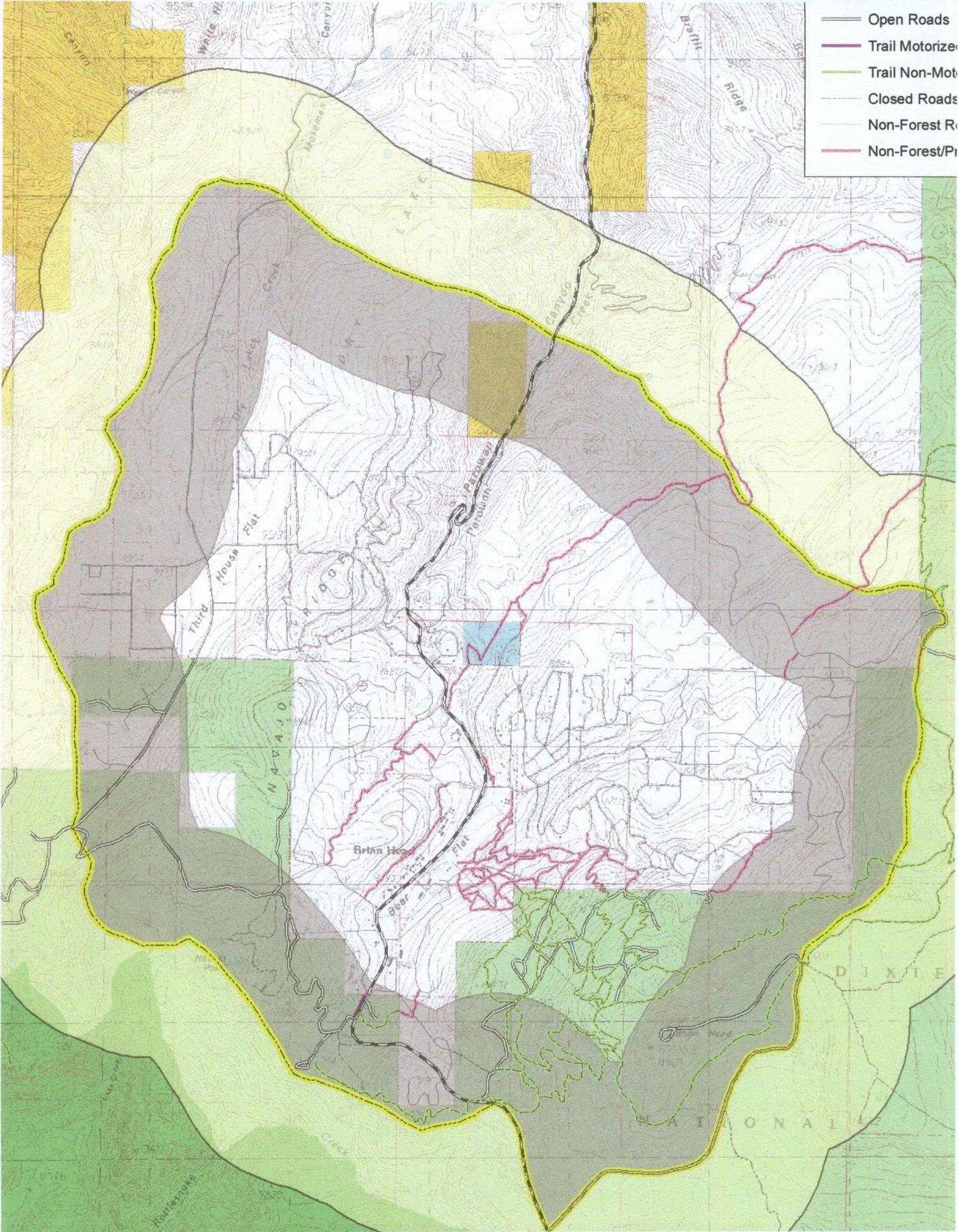
Legend

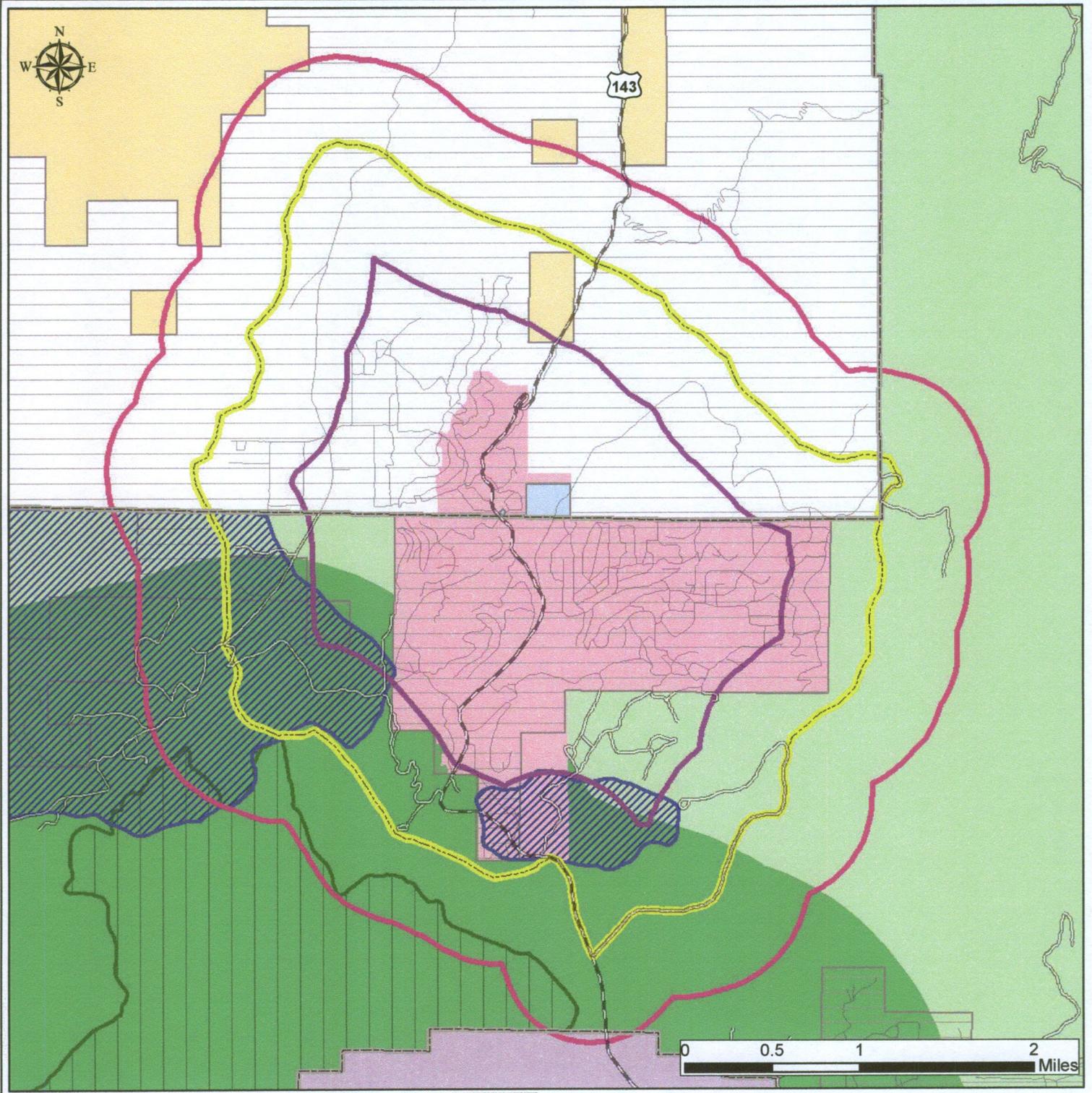
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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Project Boundary |  Private |
| 1/2 Mile Buffer |  Wilderness |
|  Inside-3852 Acres |  Highway |
|  Outside-5024 Acres |  Open Roads |
| |  Non-Forest Road |



State of Utah-Iron County
 Brian Head
 Community at Risk

- Open Roads
- Trail Motorize
- Trail Non-Mot
- - - Closed Roads
- Non-Forest R
- Non-Forest/Pi





Legend

- Project Boundary
- 1/2 Mile Buffer
- Inside-3852 Acres
- Outside-5024 Acres
- Brian Head Municipality
- Municipal Watersheds
- Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat
- Forest Boundary
- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- Private
- State
- Wilderness
- Highway
- Open Roads
- Non-Forest Road

**State of Utah-Iron County
Brian Head
Community at Risk**

| Ownership | Total Acres |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Bureau of Land Management | 151.25 |
| Natnal For est | 4057.44 |
| Natnal Park Servi ced | 12.73 |
| Private | 4354.38 |
| Wilderness(NF) | 299.92 |
| Grand Total | 8875.71 |

