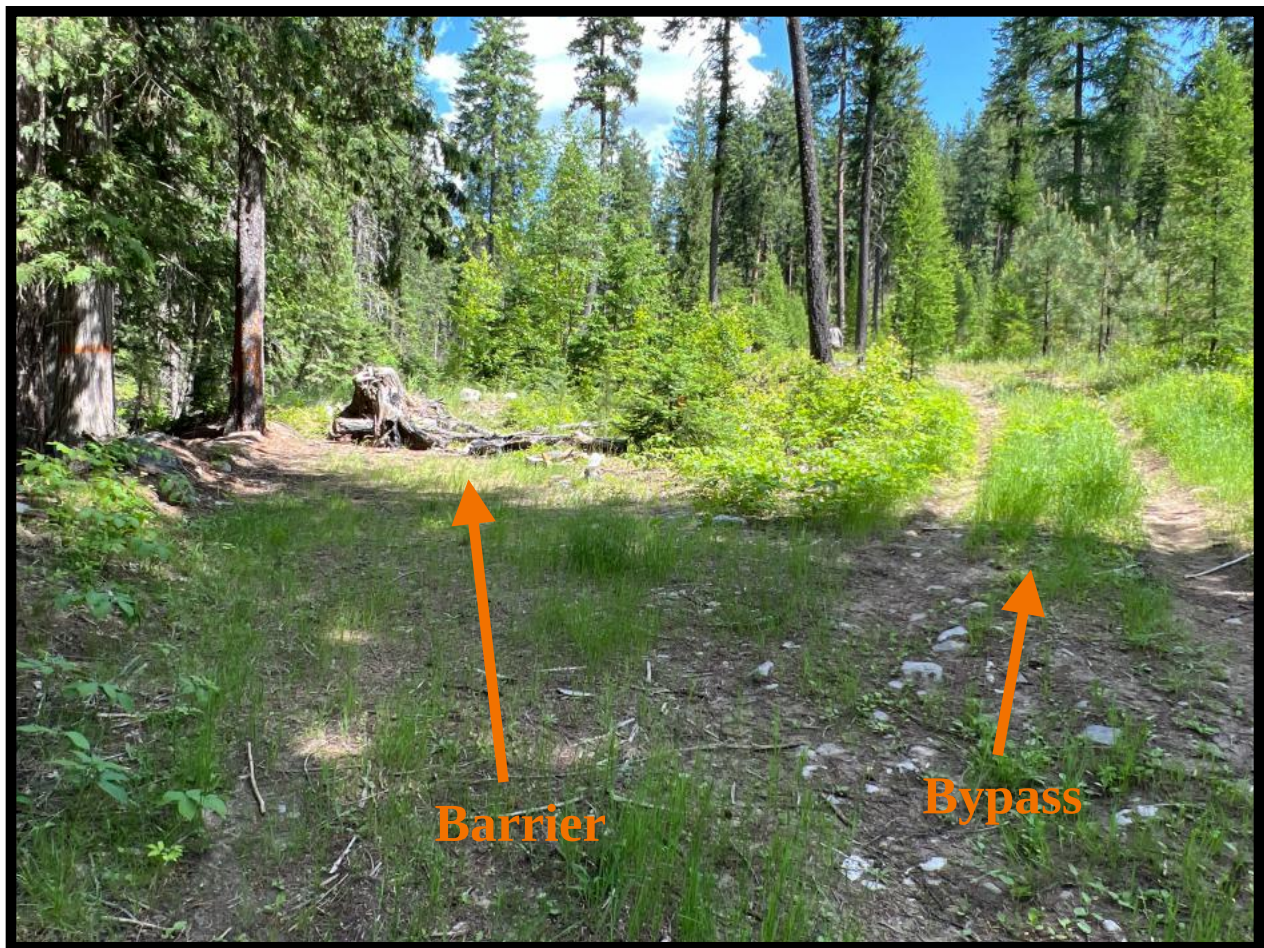




Insufficient Grizzly Barrier Report 2020-2025

CYE BMU 12/Knotty Pine Project Area

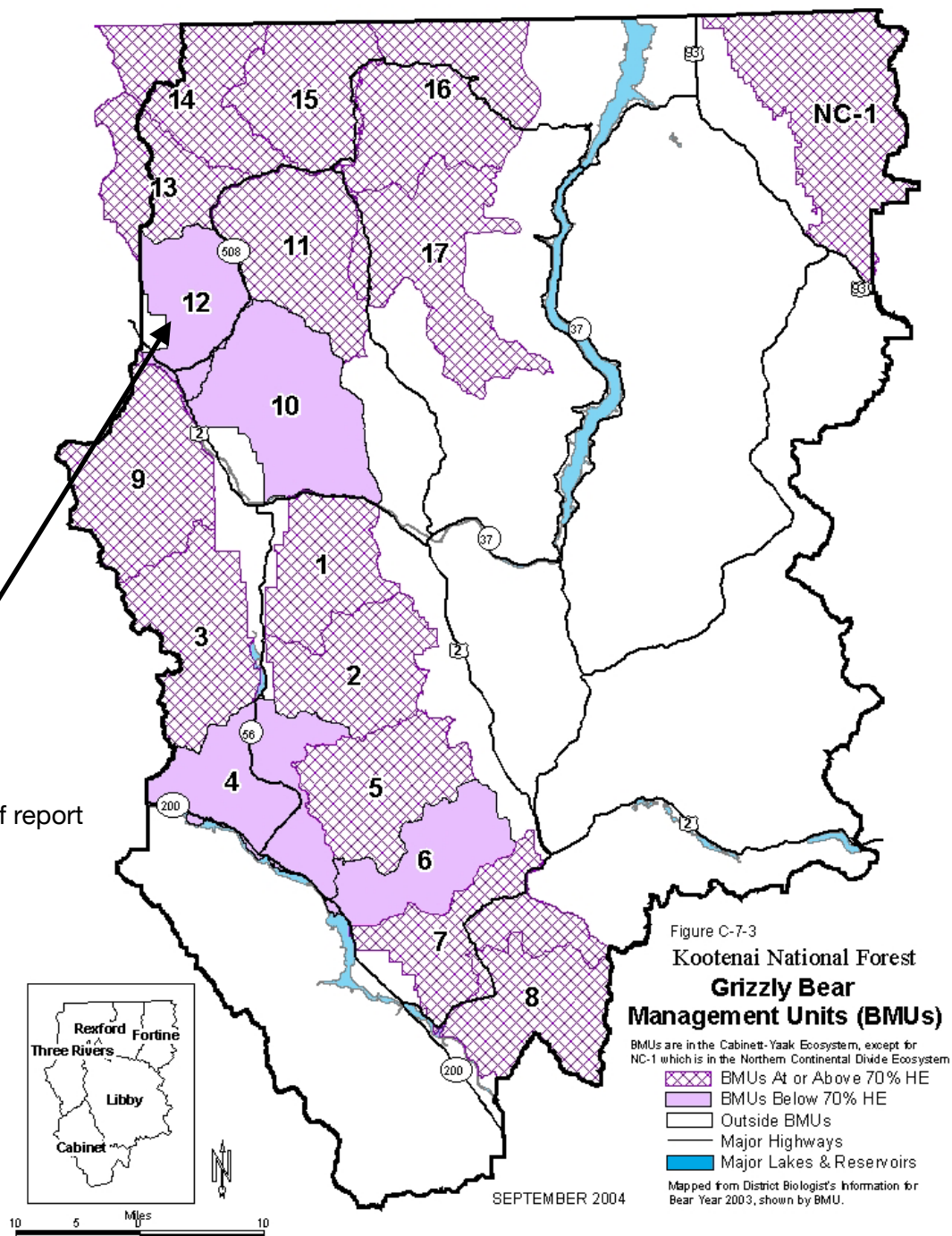
Submitted July 2025



Prepared by
Chris Bachman, Conservation Director
Yaak Valley Forest Council

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Geographic area of report
BMU 12



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YVFC submits this report in a collaborative effort with the USFS to ensure secure habitat for Yaak grizzly bears. YVFC is documenting insufficient road barriers in the Kootenai National Forest to limit core habitat fragmentation, a primary threat to the Yaak's vulnerable grizzly bear population, due to the proliferation of access on unauthorized forest roads. With approximately 25 bears remaining in the Yaak portion of the Cabinet/Yaak Ecosystem, the USFS must protect key habitat from unauthorized road usage. YVFC documentation and reporting of insufficient road barriers aims to clearly and convincingly convey the imminent need for the USFS to prioritize installing barriers that will prevent unauthorized disturbance of sensitive habitats critical to grizzly bear recovery.

Roads fragment habitats and provide human access, which are proven key factors in grizzly bear mortality.

Preserving landscape connectivity by decreasing unauthorized access is vital to ensuring the survival of threatened species in the Yaak and beyond. The YVFC, like the Foundation, is committed to developing and implementing effective, reputable methods for protecting key habitats for threatened species from human disturbance, directly preserving these critical natural lands. This project will lay the foundation for YVFC to work with the USFS to effectively protect these habitats and ensure that wildlife in the Yaak, including the USFS-designated "most vulnerable" grizzly bear population, can thrive.



Chris Bachman
Conservation Director
Yaak Valley Forest Council

Date

BMU 12-Knotty Pine Project Area

BMU 12: Female with young documented 2018-2023

2023

Credible grizzly bear detections: 35

Females with young detected: 1

Females with young detected, unduplicated: 1

Females with yearling cubs or two-year-olds detected: 2

Females with yearling cubs or two-year-olds detected, unduplicated: 2

DATUM: WGS 84

The Yaak Valley Forest Council traveled around the 56,009-acre Knotty Pine project area to document the effectiveness of USFS Motor-Vehicle (MV) road closures/ barriers. Fifteen roads were found to have insufficient barriers, and in some cases, there were no barriers at all.

* Mileage estimates behind barriers are approximations based on USFS 2016 topographic maps and aerial imagery.

KP 1- Coordinates: N 48.634020, W -115.901282

Date: 18 June 2025

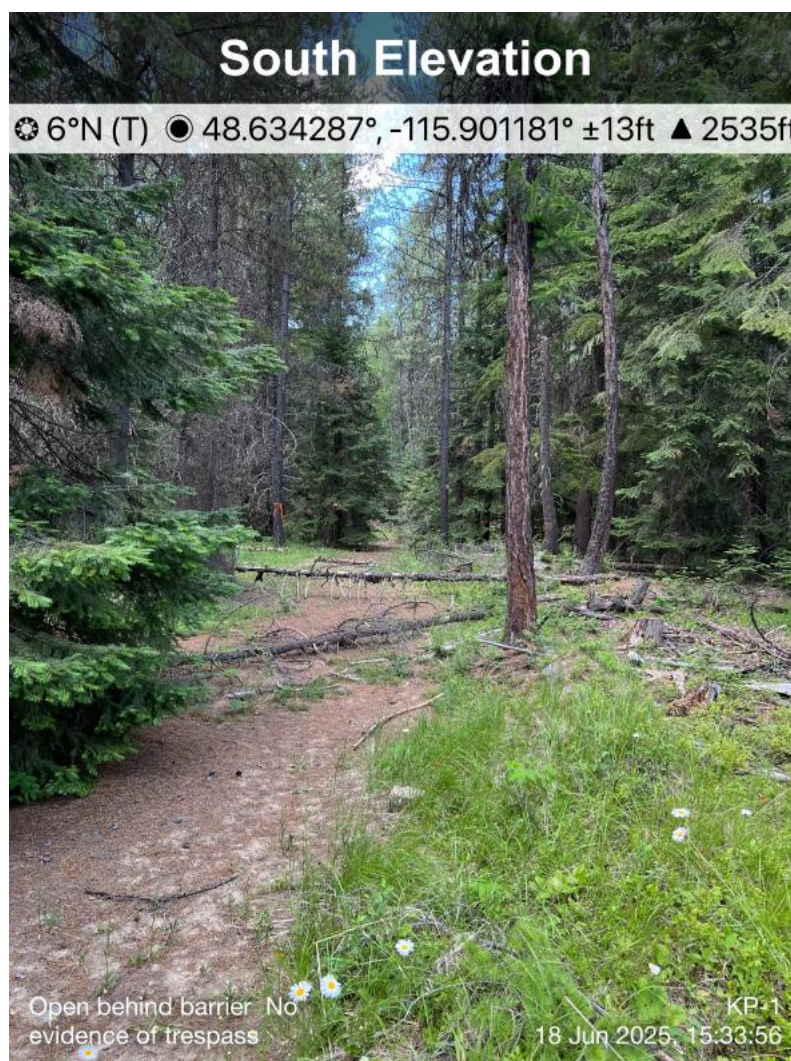
The road is ineffectively blocked with a passable berm. The berm is overgrown with vegetation and degraded, allowing for easy bypass. Bypassing this berm provides access to the road that the berm is intended to block.

Noxious weeds present: Hawkweed, Knapweed, St. John's Wort.

Remedy: rebuild berm with a tank trap or place large boulders blocking trespass.

The ineffective barrier allows motor vehicle access to approximately* 2.5 miles of "closed" road.





KP 2- Coordinates: N 48.630451, W -115.904716

Date: 18 June 2025

The matrix of roads is ineffectively blocked; neither a berm nor a gate is present. The matrix of roads accessible here is accessible from two points on Hwy 508. See attached map.

Noxious weeds present: Orange hawkweed, mullen, knapweed, St. John's Wort, oxeye daisy.

Remedy: Effectively gate both access points off of Hwy 508, blocking trespass, boulders and signage.

The ineffective barrier allows motor vehicle access to approximately* 1.6 miles of "closed" unmapped road.



North Elevation

☼ 193°S (T) ● 48.629642°, -115.904490° ±13ft ▲ 2515ft



Tree blockage

KP-2
18 Jun 2025, 14:19:07



KP 3- Coordinates: N 48.611450, W -115.933429

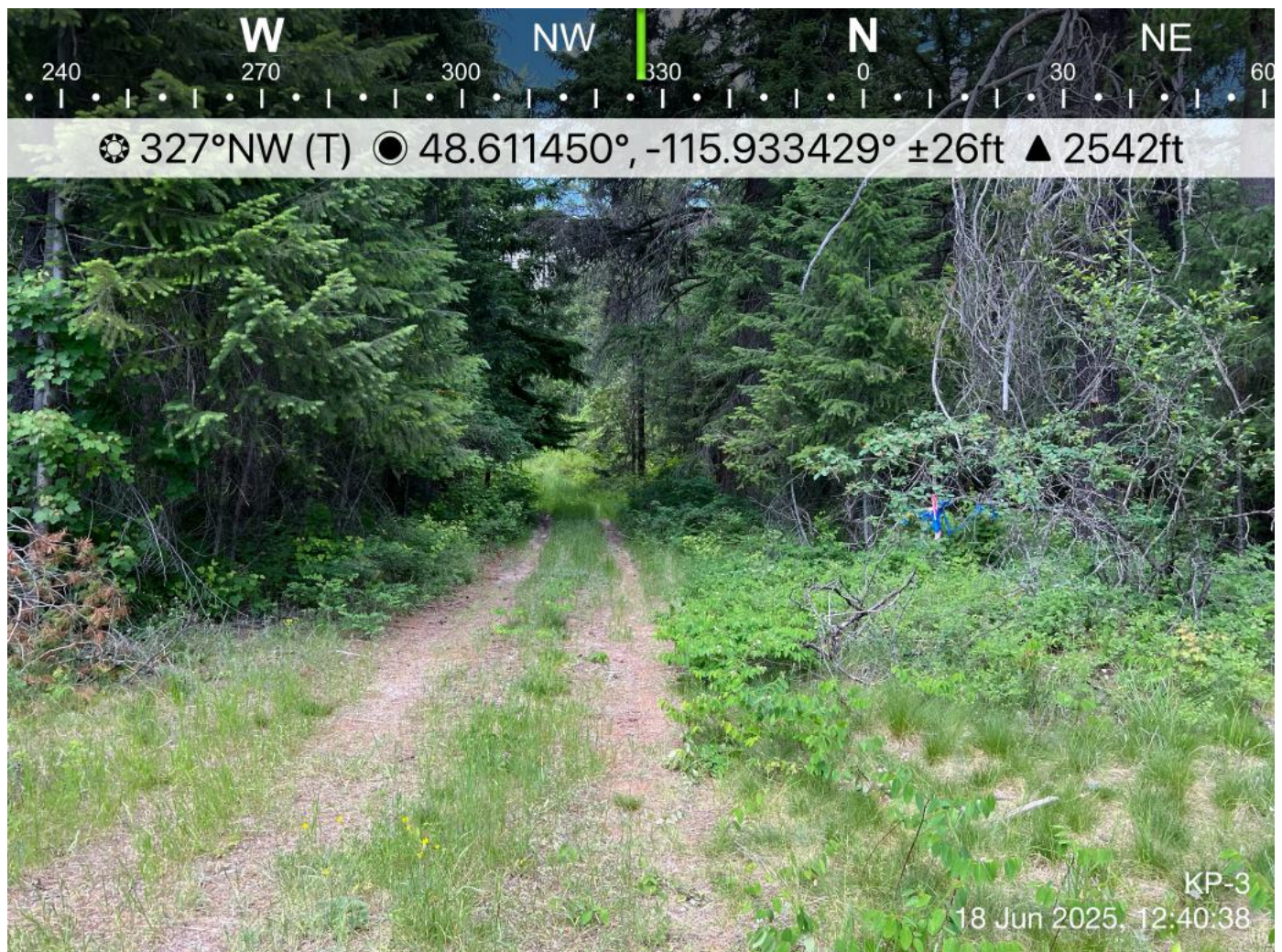
Date: 18 June 2025

The berm designed to block road access is approximately 300 feet from the road, with an obvious two-track road leading off of Hwy 508 offering access. The forest on the right side of the berm allows bypass of the berm and motor-vehicle access to the “closed” road behind the berm. A user-created bypass begins approximately 60 feet before the berm. The bypass is approximately 10 ft wide and passable by a side-by-side vehicle or truck. The road is navigable behind the barrier, although it is obstructed by a recent tree fall about 300 ft behind the barrier. Truck tracks and rutting were visible and documented. Trash dumping was also present on the site.

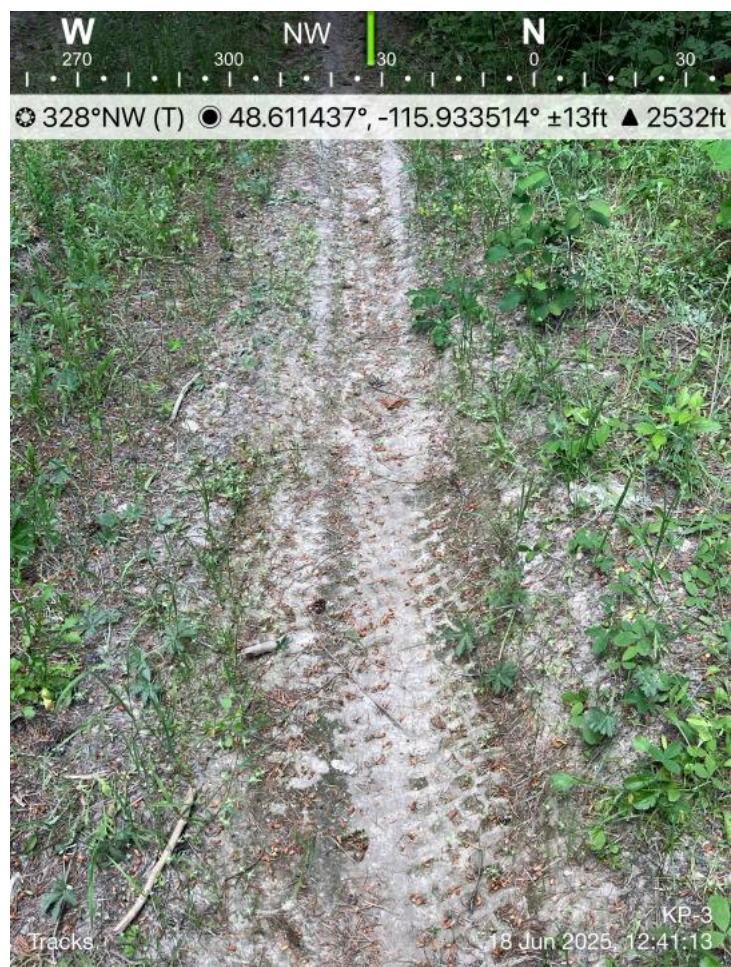
Noxious weeds present: Orange hawkweed, mullen, knapweed, St. John’s Wort, ox-eye daisy.

Remedy: Effectively gate access point off of Hwy 508, blocking trespass, boulders, and signage.

The ineffective barrier allows motor vehicle access to approximately* 1.6 miles of “closed” road.



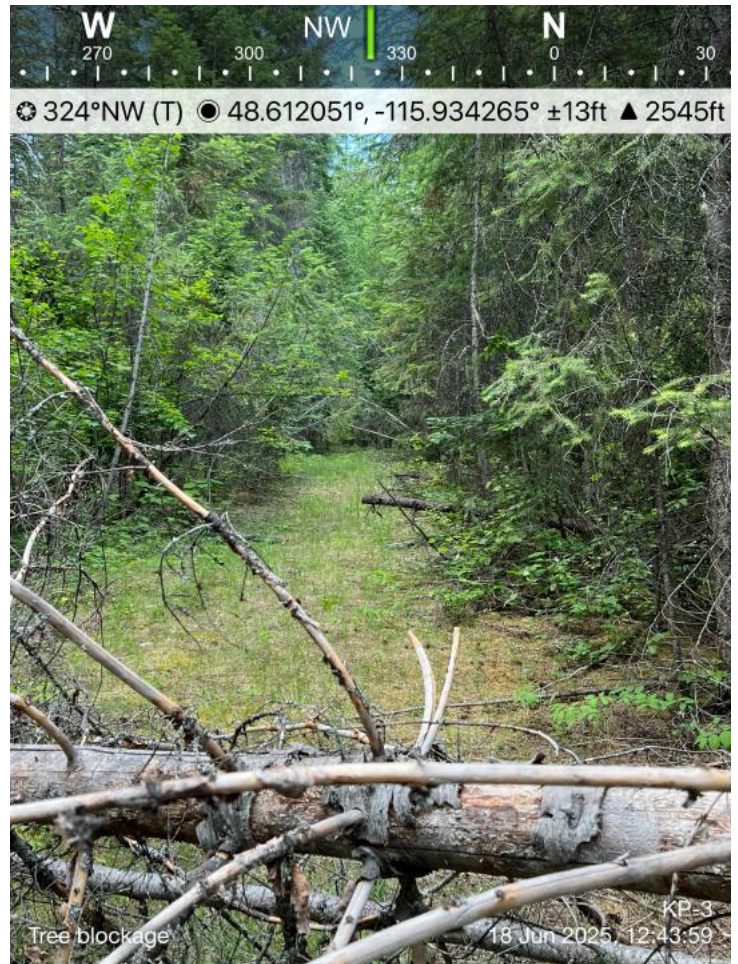
Tire tracks are present over 300 feet from the main road.



Trash is present on-site from illegal dumping.



The road is blocked over 300 feet from the main road access.



KP 4- Coordinates: N 48.623316, W -115.965553

Date: 18 June 2025

Spur road off of #395

In 2025, the road shows evidence of recent excavation work that created a tank trap, making the road impassable to four-wheeled traffic. It is, however, passable by a two-wheeled motorized vehicle.

Weathering will reduce its effectiveness.

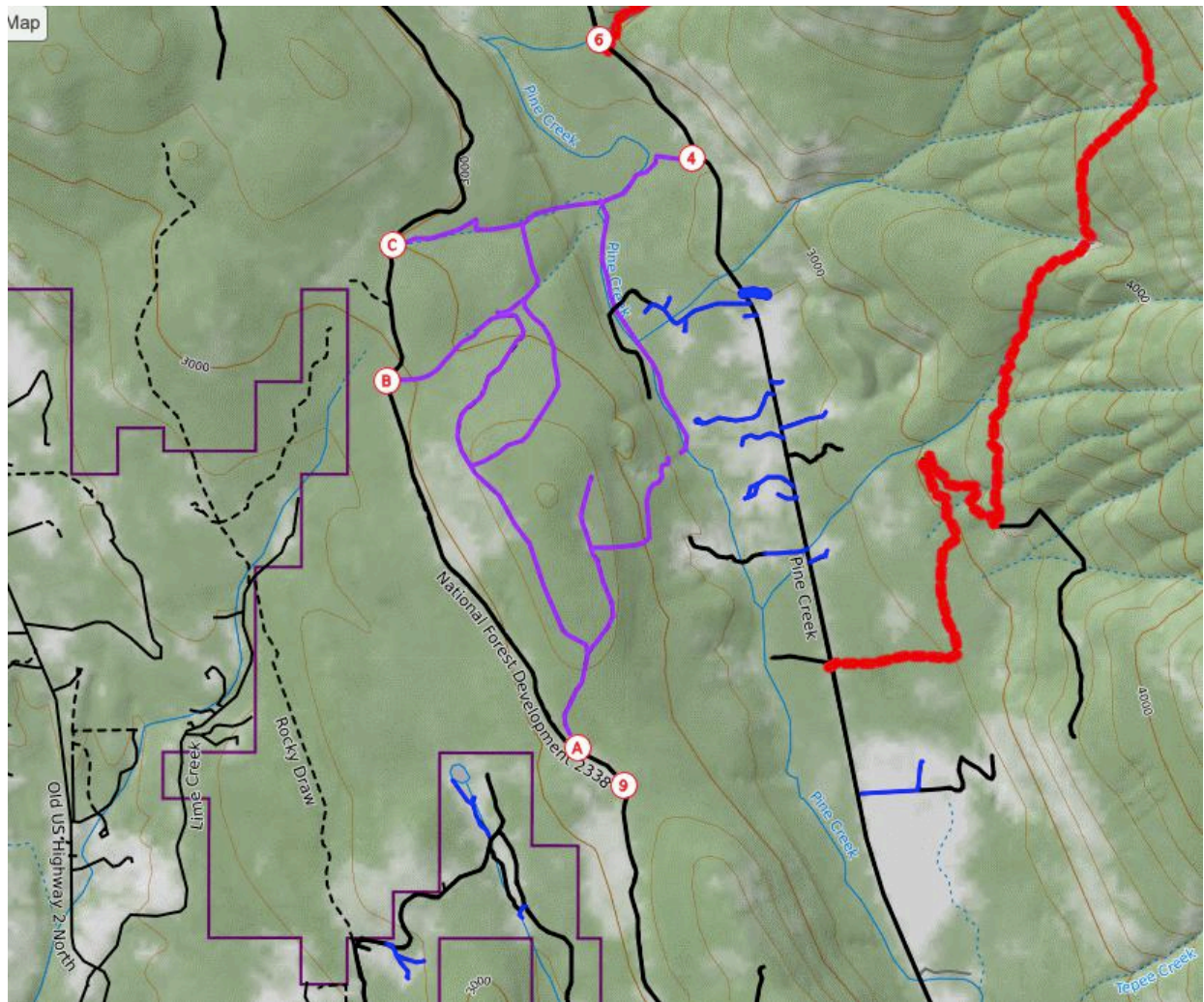
Noxious Weeds: Hawkweed and St John's Wort.

Remedy: Deeper tank trap, boulders, or locked gate.

The ineffective barrier allows motor vehicle access to approximately* 2.95 miles of “closed” road, and connects through these “closed” roads to many more miles of open road.







Insufficient barrier at ④ opens to a matrix of roads exceeding 5 miles.* Barriers A, B, and C were assessed for effectiveness.

KP 4A

Berm/ditch (tank trap) barrier present. The barrier has been traveled to the point of losing its effectiveness. The road is accessible for four-wheeler or dirt bike, so ineffective at blocking MV access. Signage present, ineffective.

Noxious weeds:

Remedy: Additional berm-boulders, signage

The road connects in a matrix of roads exceeding 5 miles.*







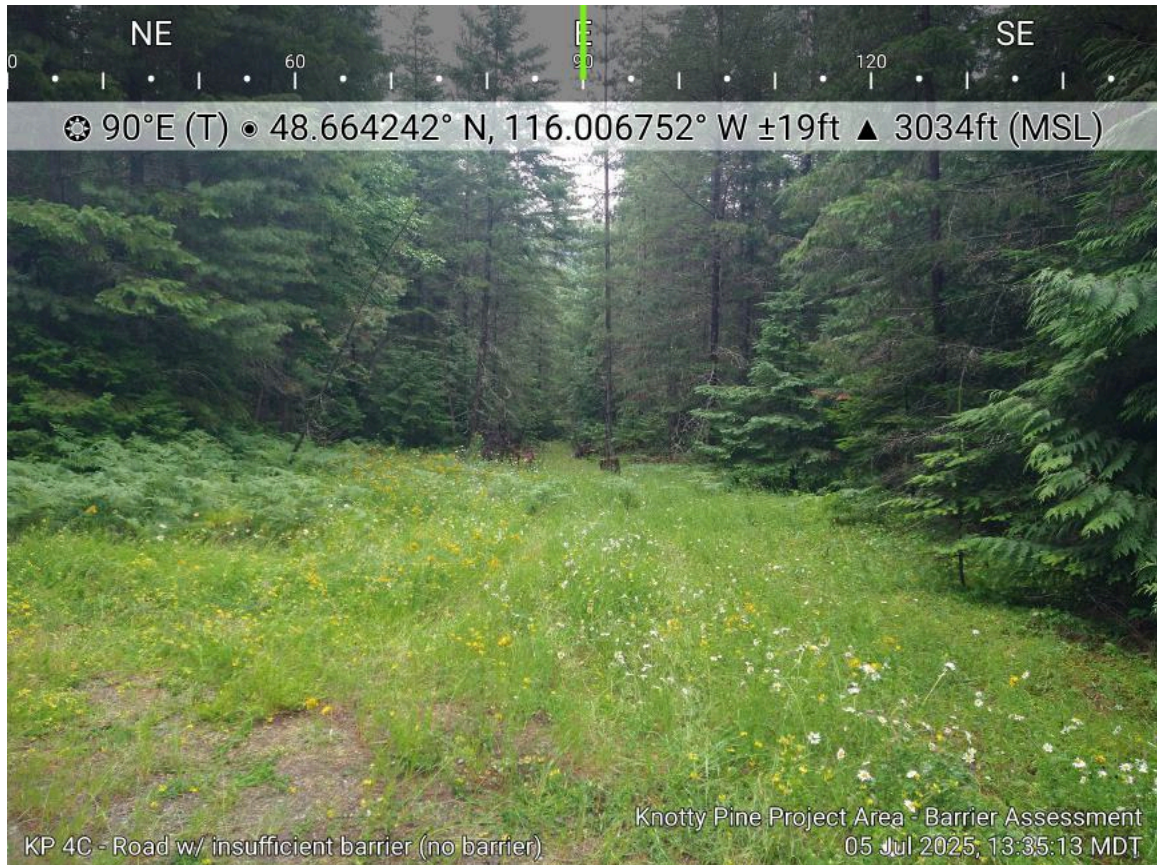
4B-Blocked road with berm ditch barrier

The effectiveness of this barrier is negated by the ineffectiveness of barriers 4, 4A and 4C.



4C

Road with no barrier





KP 5- Coordinates: N 48.592669, W -115.99014

Date: 05 July 2025

Gated barrier with three clear detours around it. A motor-vehicle bypass begins 15 feet before the gate barrier on the left. Tire tracks, rutting, and destroyed vegetation show evidence of access. This route gains access behind the gate by the nearby power-line clear cut. It measures approximately 126 feet long. There is also a 13-foot gap directly to the left of the gate, offering an easy route around, though it shows minimal signs of MV use. The third route around the barrier leads to a closed road 150 feet behind the gate on the right, with trees and vegetation cleared. This route shows clear signs of motor vehicle use. In 2019, two YVFC field crew members observed illegal MV passage at this site and reported it to the 1-800-tip-mont hotline. (more pictures available of site)





KP 6- Coordinates: N 48.671487, W -115.995362

Date: 18 June 2025

Trail 220 off of Pine Creek Rd #395

The barrier has been remediated with a berm since 2022. The barrier is currently effective at blocking four-wheel, two-axle traffic. The berm is permeable to 2-wheel traffic (see photos). In 2022, the trail was open with no barrier with ample room for illegal motor vehicle access. Tracks and rutting were present along the lower stretch of the trail. Access distance was in excess of the dispersed camping rule. There was also evidence of illegal firewood gathering in the floodplain, with wood rounds and log segments left in the stream.

Remedy: Needs an effective barrier and “no motorized access” signage. Due to the surrounding landscape, a gate would be effective here, or at a minimum, boulders.

Trail access extends well over* 50 miles into core grizzly habitat.



East Elevation

☼ 258°W (T) ● 48.671448°, -115.995451° ±13ft ▲ 2908ft



East Elevation

☼ 287°W (T) ● 48.671481°, -115.995433° ±13ft ▲ 2911ft



KP 7- Coordinates: N 48.601887, W -115.998015

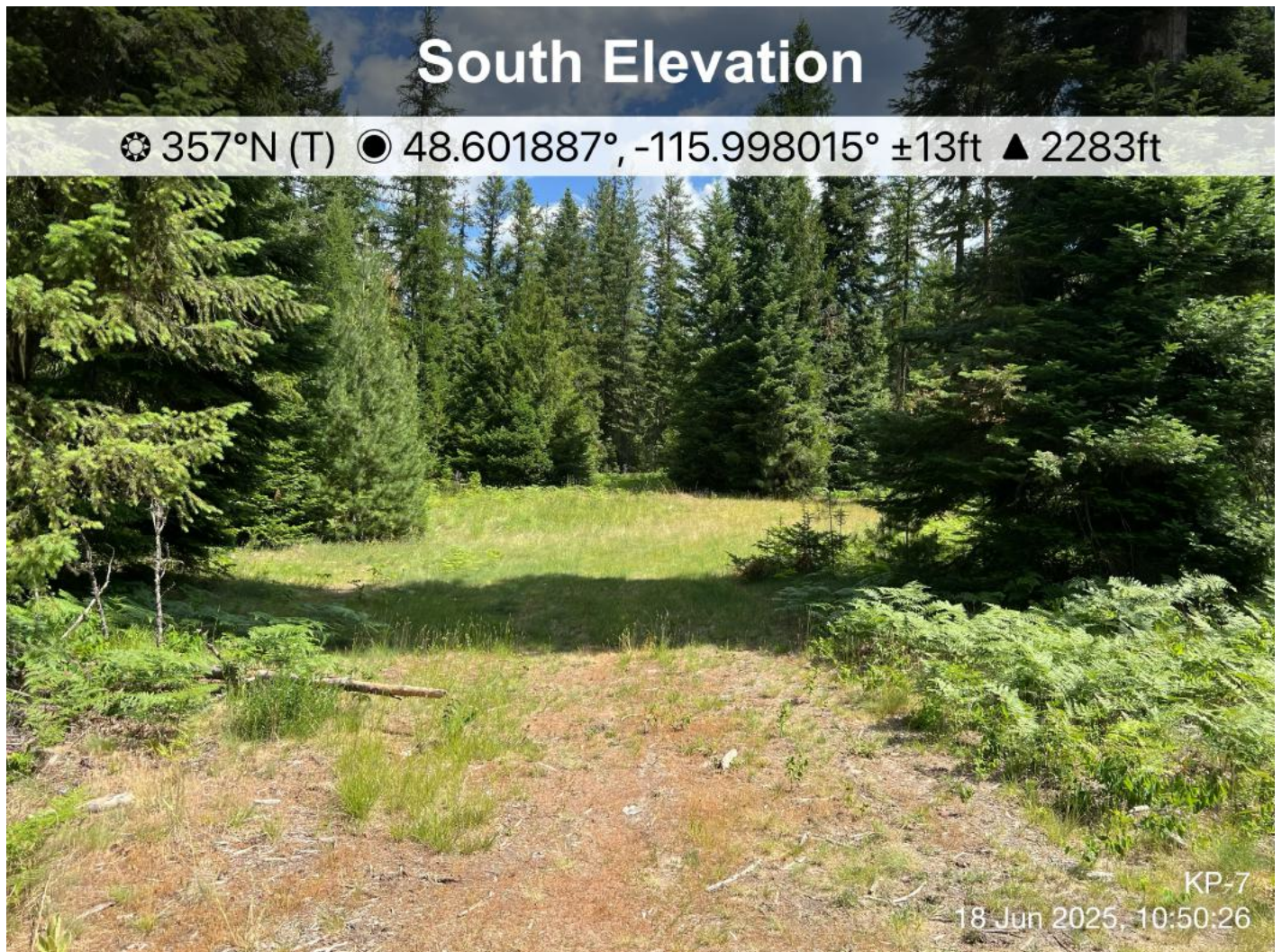
Date: 18 June 2025

The site appears to be user-created and is open access to a meadow from the main road. Two roads exceeding 300 feet leave the meadow and enter core grizzly habitat, with no barriers present. Litter present is evidence of trespass.

Noxious Weeds: Yellow tansy, knapweed, hawkweed, St John's wort.

Remedy: Berm, gate and/or boulders, this is currently open access.

Roads extend beyond 300 feet.



South Elevation

☉ 19°N (T) ● 48.602029°, -115.997954° ±13ft ▲ 2289ft



KP-7 road and trash
18 Jun 2025, 10:51:03

West Elevation

☉ 68°E (T) ● 48.602300°, -115.997503° ±13ft ▲ 2303ft



KP-7 road 300+ feet
18 Jun 2025, 10:52:00

South West Elevation

☀ 52°NE (T) ● 48.602418°, -115.997225° ±13ft ▲ 2308ft



KP-7 road 300+ feet 2
18 Jun 2025, 10:52:46

KP 8- Coordinates: N 48.602762, W -115.979777

Date: 18 June 2025

The barrier is pictured below, left, a berm with a root ball and logs. The barrier is easily bypassed by motor vehicles on the road to the right. The bypass begins about 30' before berm.

Noxious weeds: Knapweed

Remedy: Additional berm / signage

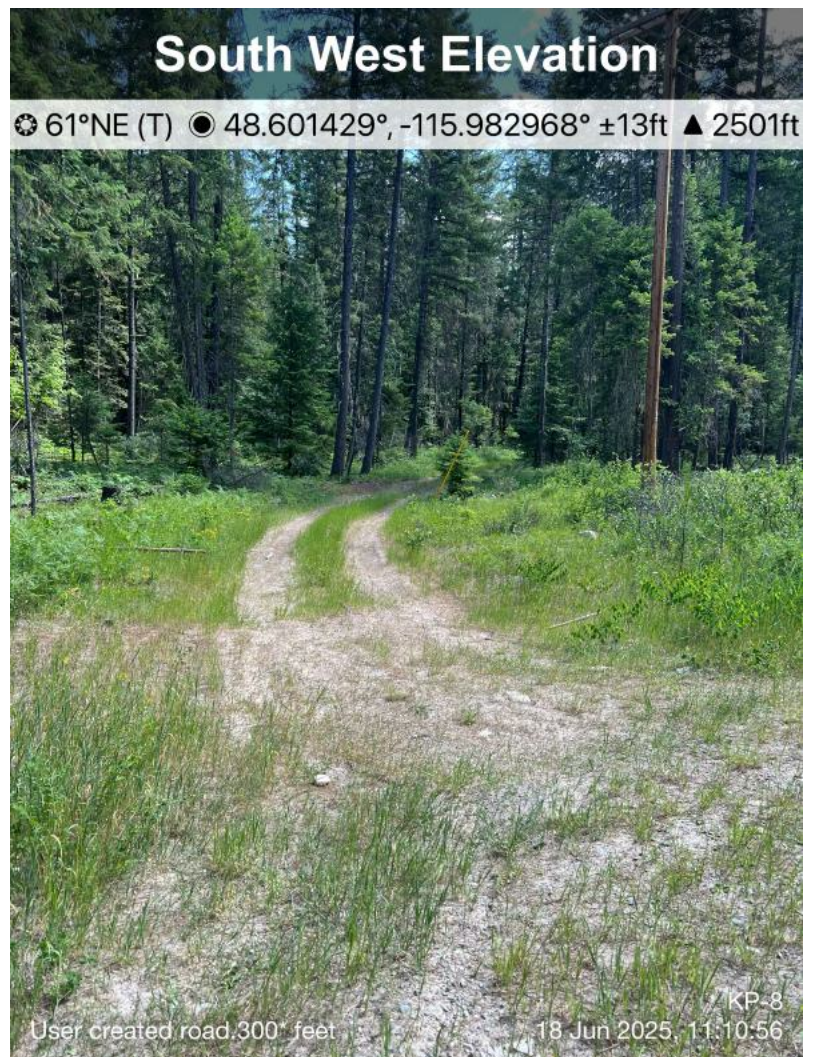
The road to the right extends approximately* 1.5 miles into core grizzly bear habitat.



The barrier blocking the road is comprised a berm, a root ball, and stacked timber.



Road to right that bypasses barrier continues into core habitat.



Rutted road showing evidence of trespassing toward and past the insufficient barrier.



KP 9- Coordinates: N 48.600158, W -115.973214

Date: 18 June 2025

2025.06.18 KP-9 Inaccessible. Cougar Ridge Road gate locked.

KP-9 will be assessed when gate is open.

The gate on Cougar Ridge Road is ineffective at securing the road, it is passable on both sides. The road ahead is very enticing.



Gate bypassable, left.



Gate bypassable, right.



KP 9- Coordinates: N 48.600158, W -115.973214

Date: 05 July 2025

User created road off of road #2338.

Appears to be a road for firewood cutting that exceeds 300' in length. User created road has been bermed. There is evidence of trespass over the berm as well as around the berm to the right. Visible tracks and rutting. Vegetation cleared to get access.

Noxious weeds:

Remedy: Additional berm-boulders, signage

The road to the right extends over* 300 feet behind barrier.





KP 10- Coordinates: N 48.632593, W -115.922622

Date: 18 June 2025

Newly excavated tank trap installed. No barrier present in 2022. The barrier is currently sufficient; however, the open road extends well over 300 feet beyond the barrier.

The road to the right extends approximately* 0.25 miles behind gate.





KP 11- Coordinates: N 48., W -115.

Date: 18 June 2025

Gate barrier with boulders placed on either side.

The gate is visible from Hwy 508. The berm to the right of the gate is passable on an ATV, side-by-side vehicle, or motorcycle. There is evidence of activity behind the gate, including tire tracks and a shooting range. Illegal motor-vehicle tracks noted behind gate. The lack of vegetation and/or trees to the side of the barrier has provided multiple options for getting around.

Noxious weeds: mullen, knapweed, St John's wort

Remedy: No Motor Vehicle Signage. Boulders, more boulders, added to the berms around the gate.

The road to the right extends approximately* 1.5 miles into core grizzly bear habitat.



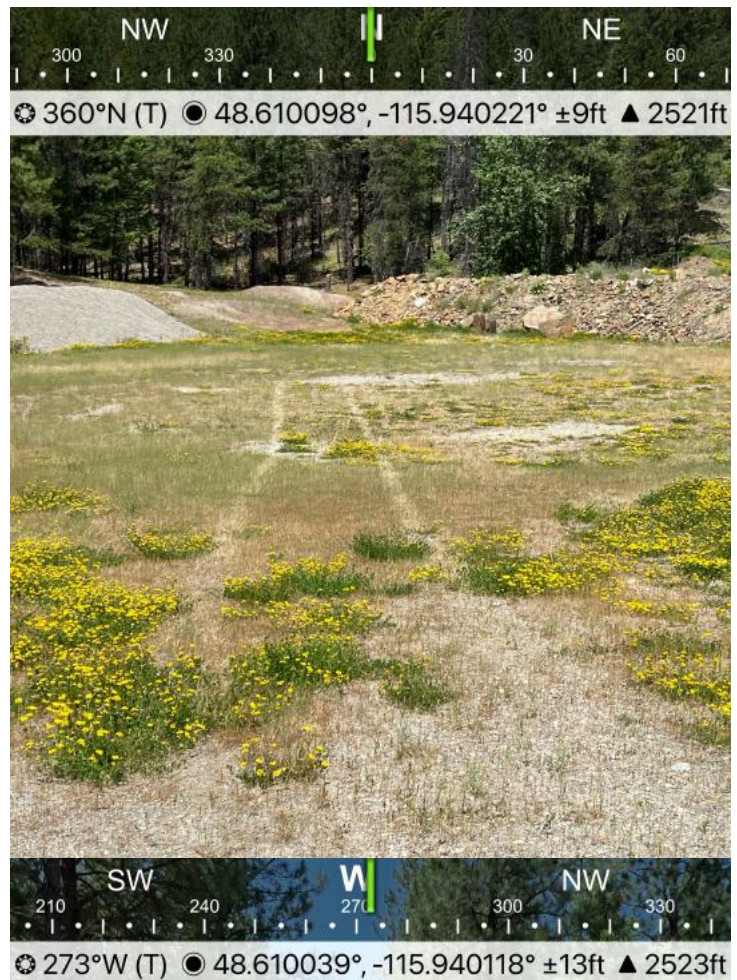
The gate is bypassable directly to the right of the gate and over the berm to the right of the gate. (Right and middle right)



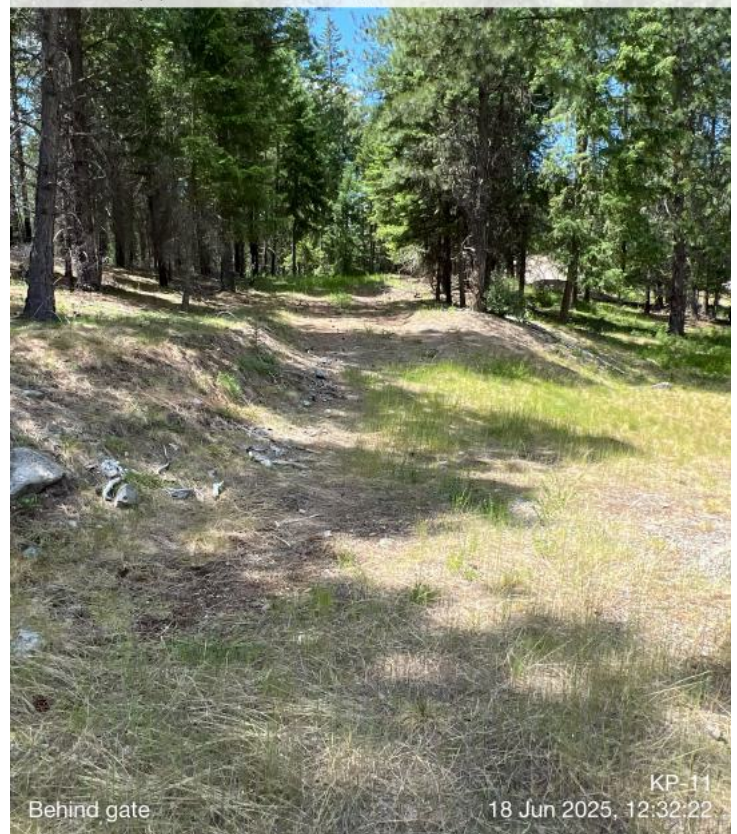
The gate is bypassable to the left over the berm.



Tire tracks behind the gate.



Additional road behind the gate.



A shooting range is located behind the gate.

The shooting station is pictured, right.

Targets, below right.



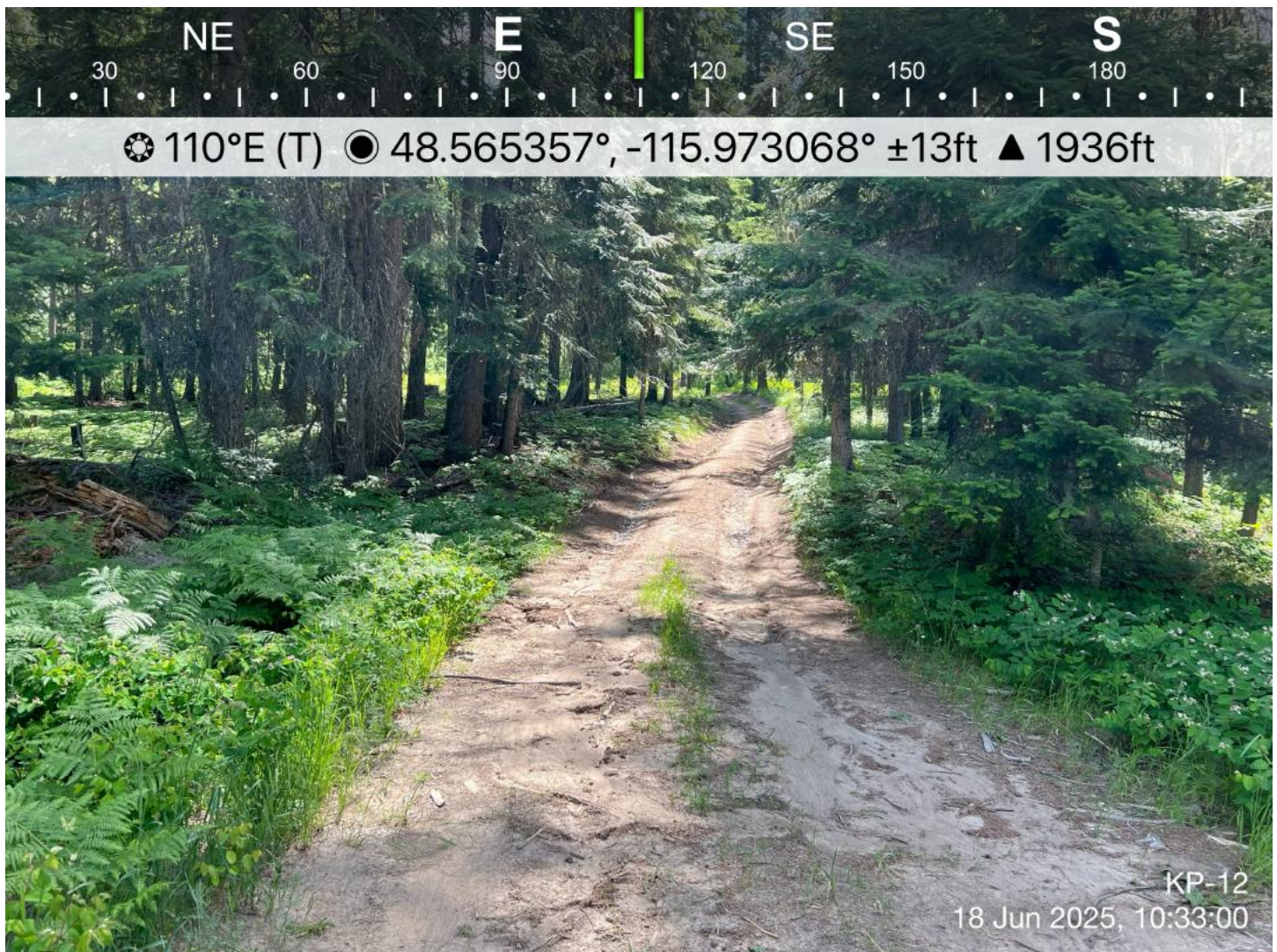
KP 12- Coordinates: N 48.565357, W -115.973068

Date: 18 June 2025

No barrier. User created road off of Hwy 2 not on the USFS KNF MV use map. This road branches off into several directions, approximately 300 feet from the highway. There is evidence of trespass and significant rutting and erosion. Roads well beyond 300 feet in length.

Remedy: Gate, berm and No Motor Vehicle Use signage.

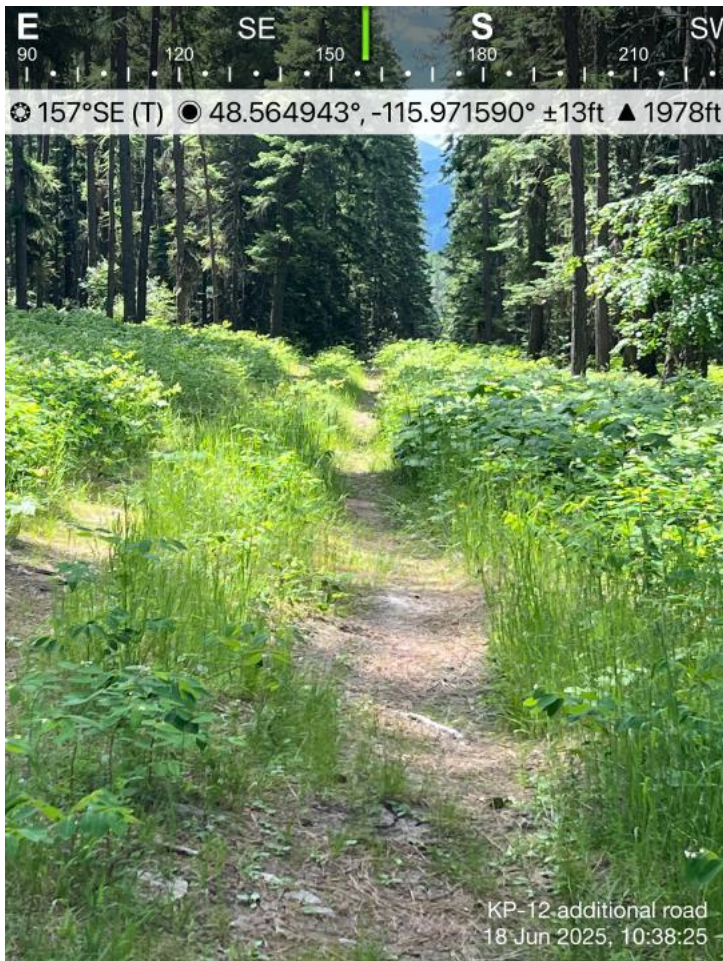
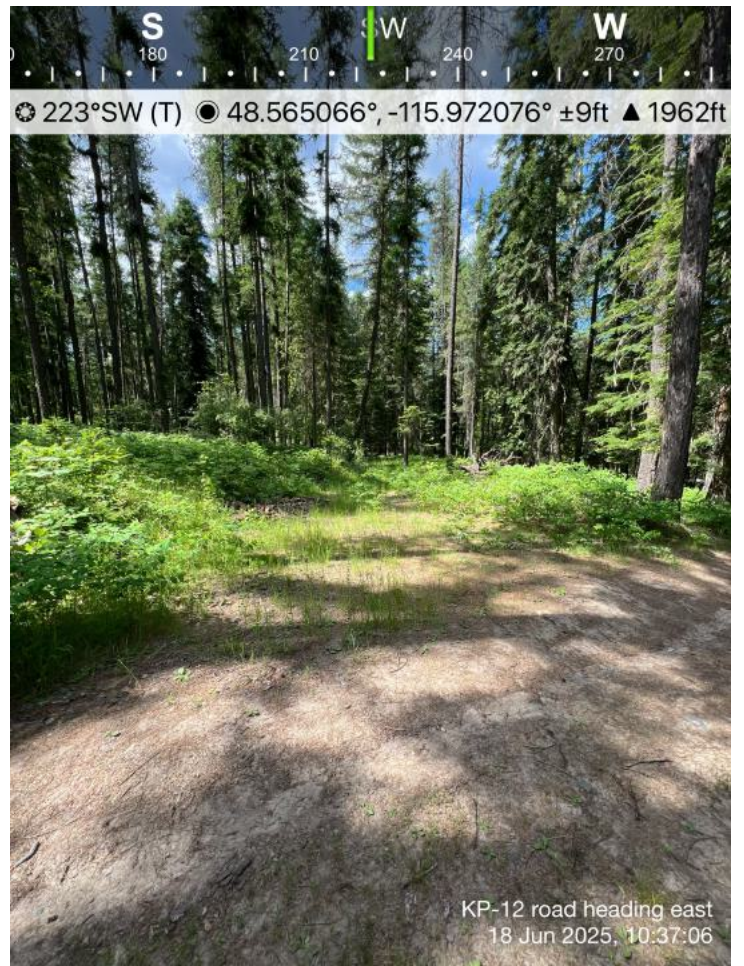
The user-created roads create over* a mile of unmapped road



Tire tracks present
indicate recent activity on
the user-created roads.



Several roads branch off from the main user-created road accessible from the highway, heading east, west, and north.



KP 13- Coordinates: N 48.676132, W -115.930002

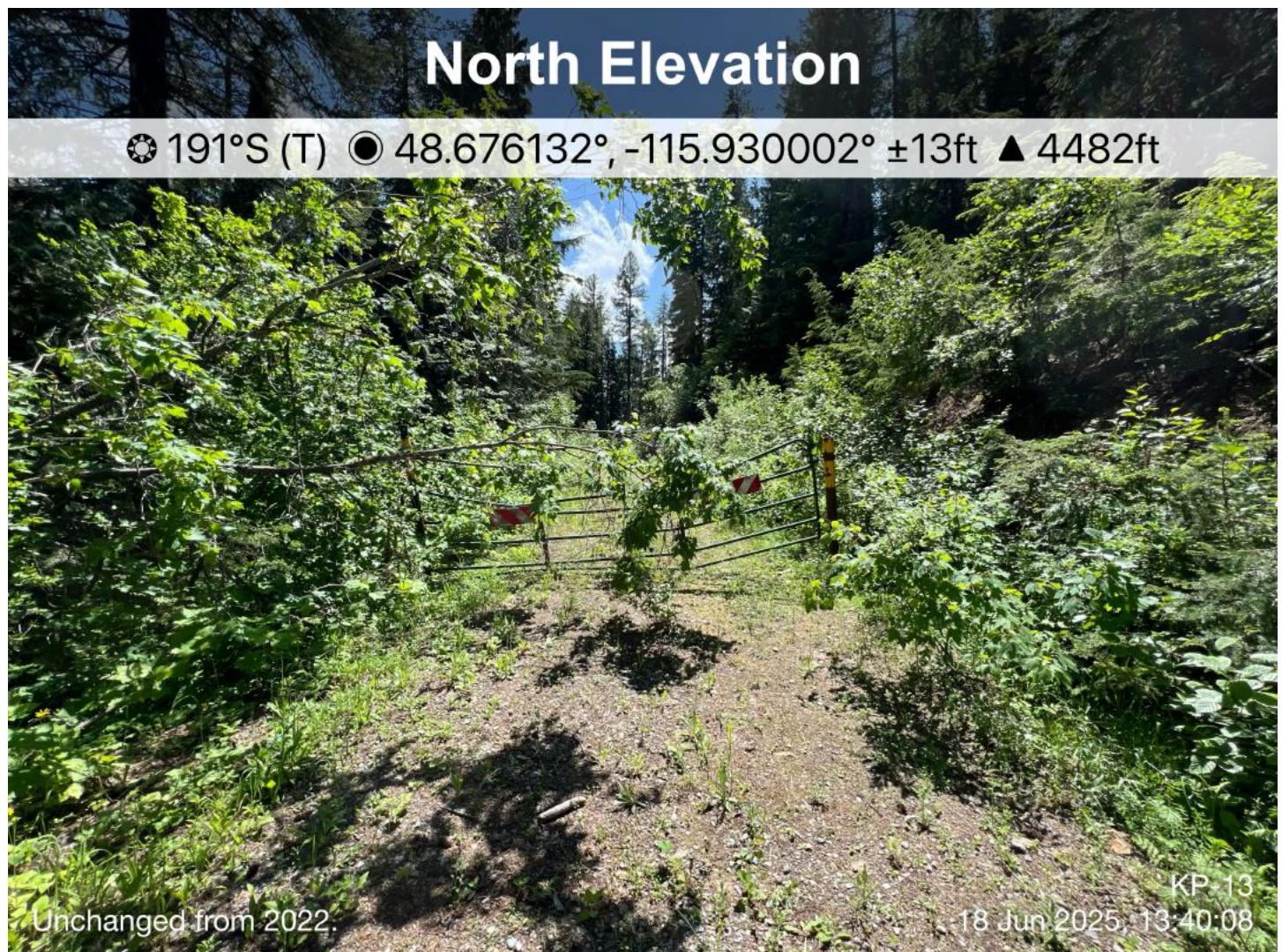
Date: 18 June 2025

The broken-down gate is unchanged since the last assessment in 2022. However, the lock is new.

This gate is at the trailhead of the Wampoo/Newton Trail. Breaching this gate allows full access to the trail system, including grizzly core habitat, behind the gate for two-wheeled motorized vehicles.

Noxious weeds: none noted

Remedy: No Motor Vehicle Signage. Boulders, more boulders around the gate.



North West Elevation

☀ 154°SE (T) ● 48.676112°, -115.930001° ±45ft ▲ 4478ft



New lock

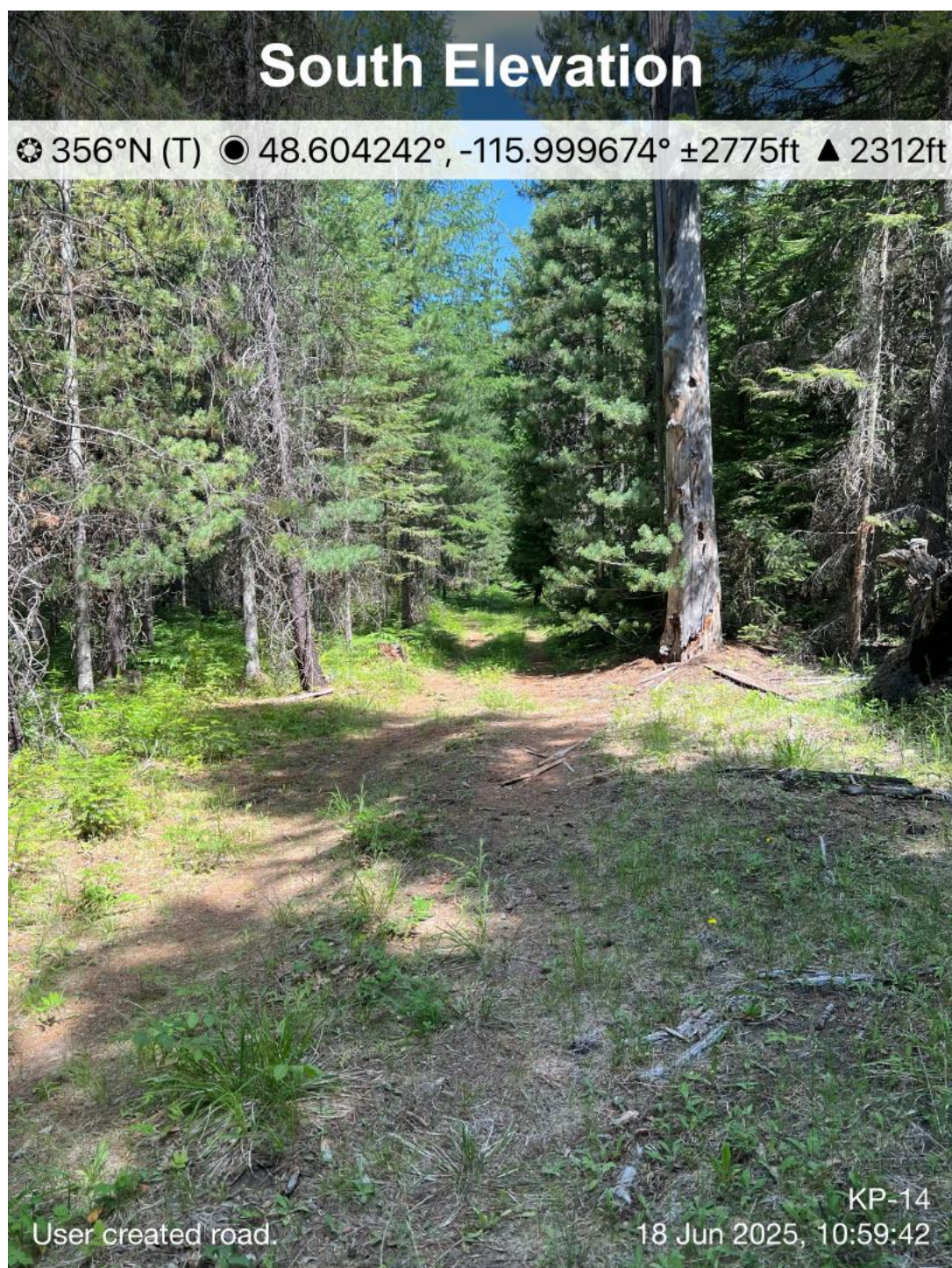
KP-13

18 Jun 2025, 13:40:50

KP 14- Coordinates: N 48.604242, W -115.999674

Date: 18 June 2025

The user-created road extends beyond 300 feet into the core grizzly habitat.



North Elevation

☀ 158°S (T) ☉ 48.602214°, -115.995882° ±13ft ▲ 2324ft



User created road.300⁺ feet

KP-14
18 Jun 2025, 11:02:38

KP 15- Coordinates: N 48., W -115.

Date: 18 June 2025

The old tank trap has a trail that accesses a hiking trail on the left. However, this trail allows access of two wheeled motor vehicles into core grizzly habitat.



South East Elevation

☼ 297°NW (T) ● 48.676525°, -115.931054° ±9ft ▲ 4486ft



two wheel access

KP-15

18 Jun 2025, 13:37:40

East Elevation

☼ 259°W (T) ● 48.676518°, -115.930936° ±13ft ▲ 4462ft



KP-15

18 Jun 2025, 13:36:50

