Night and Day: the difference between National Forest land and industrial timberland

Battle Creek watershed (shaded in green), west of Lassen National Forest, Shasta and Tehama Counties, northern California. Figures 1 and 2.

Fig.1

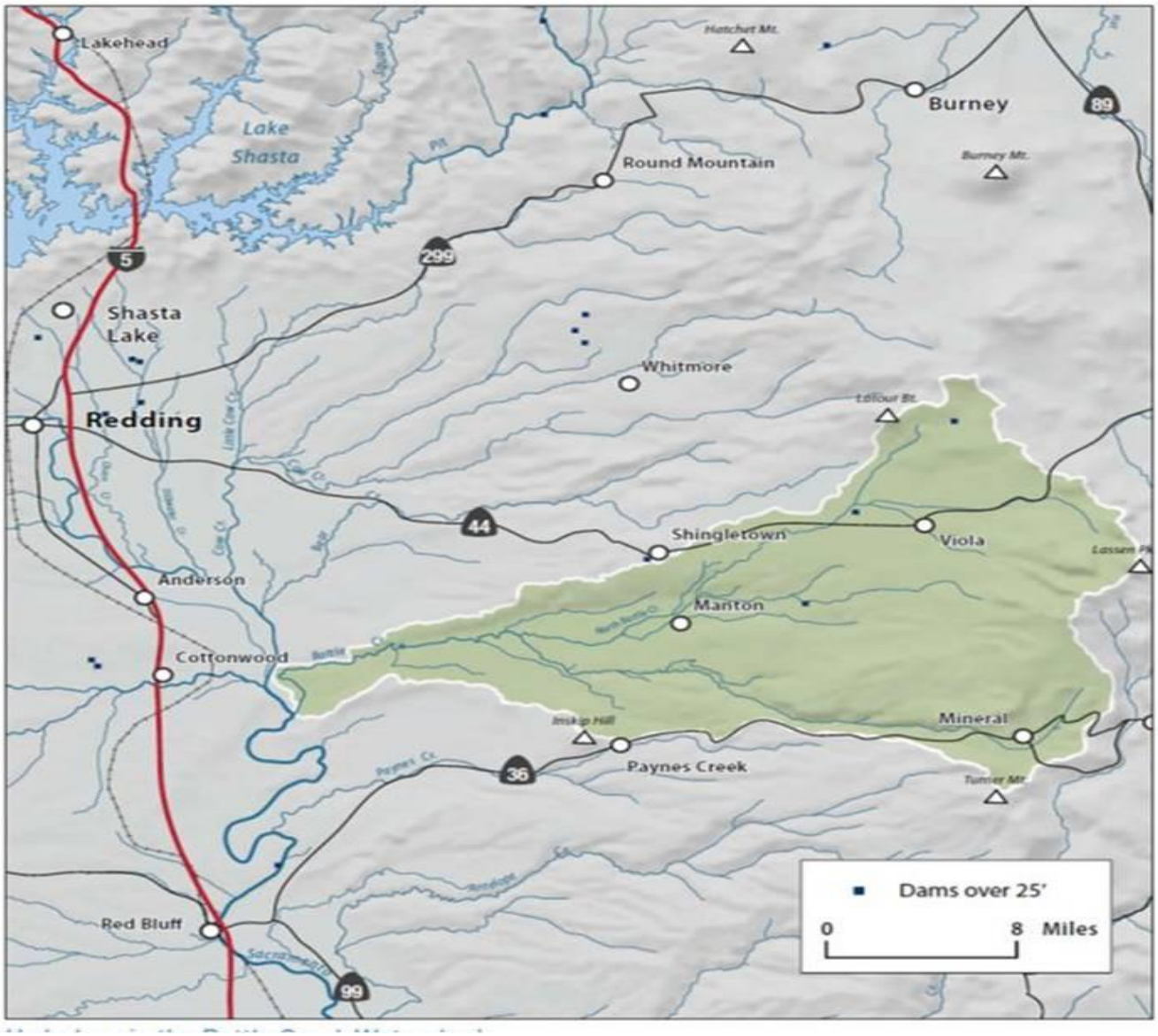

Fig. 2.

The pink line on the USGS map marks the Lassen National Forest boundary, but the white areas interspersed to the east of the boundary are privately owned industrial timberland. (Figure 3.)The black box corresponds with the area marked by white boxes in the maps in Figures 4 and 5. The main Forest Service road marked "17" on this map is named "Mineral-Viola Hwy" in Figure 4.

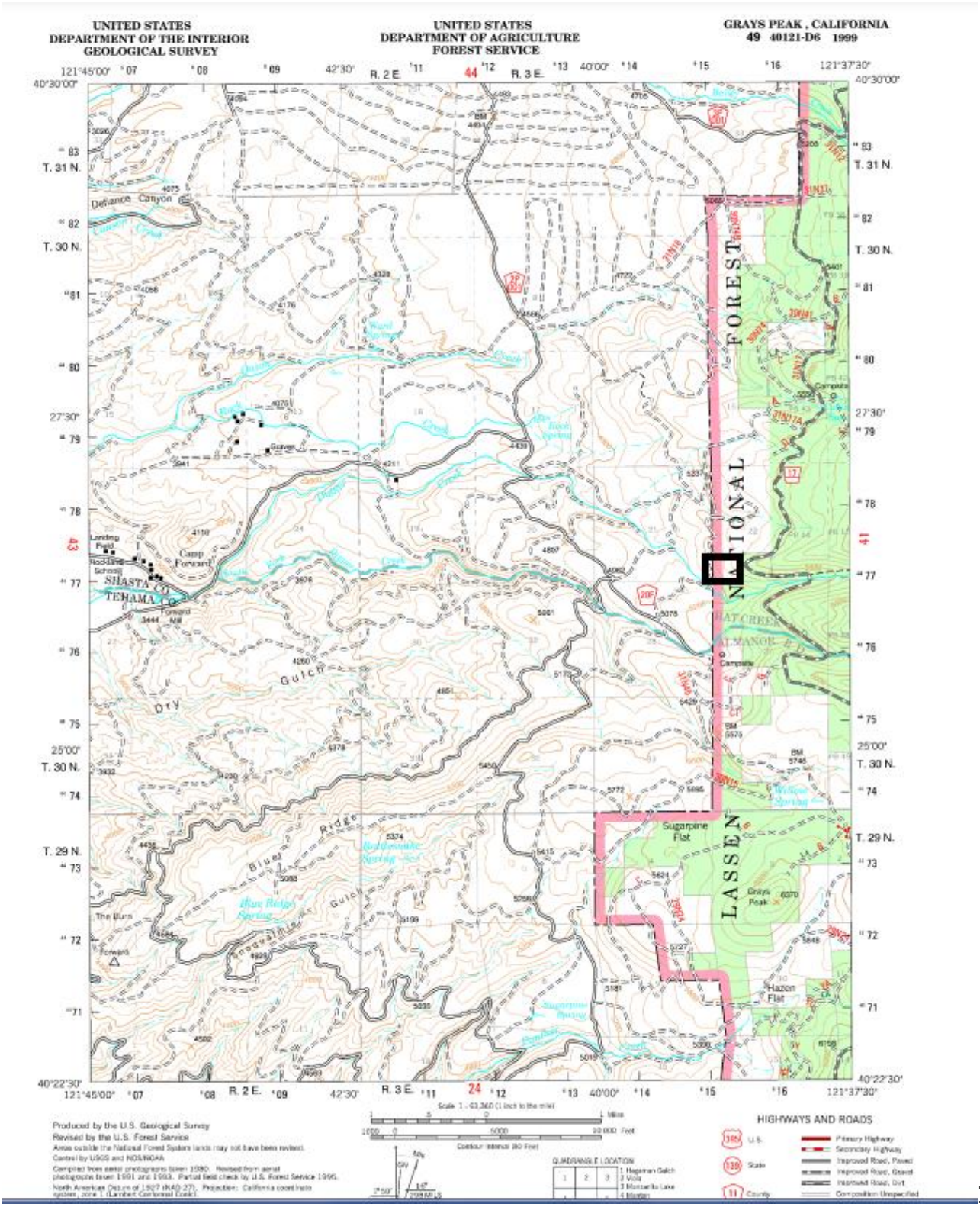

Fig. 3.

Figure 4 shows some of the cut units from the 2004 Willow Spring logging plan (bare, clearcut areas) with the proposed units from the Powerhouse logging plan, marked in orange. Each unit is approximately 20 acres, equivalent to 4 city blocks.

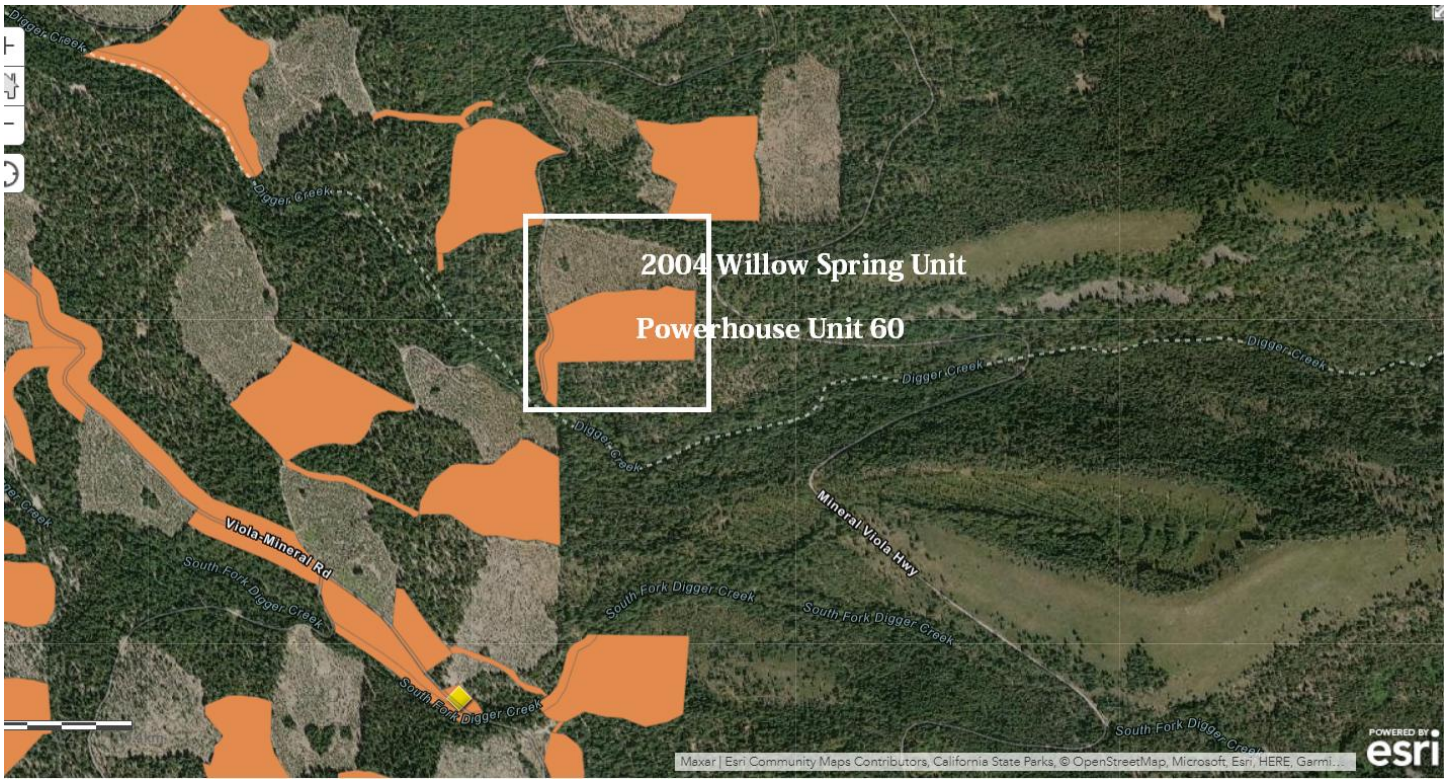

Fig. 4.

Figure 5 is a more distant view of the industrial timberland and Lassen Forest boundary. Here may be seen the many past clearcut areas, the large brown bare area from the 2012 Ponderosa Fire, and the proposed units from the 2 plans we have in-progress lawsuits against. The orange units are the Powerhouse logging plan, approved in 2021. The red units are the Rio Gatito logging plan, approved in 2020. Where the clearcuts stop is where the National Forest begins.

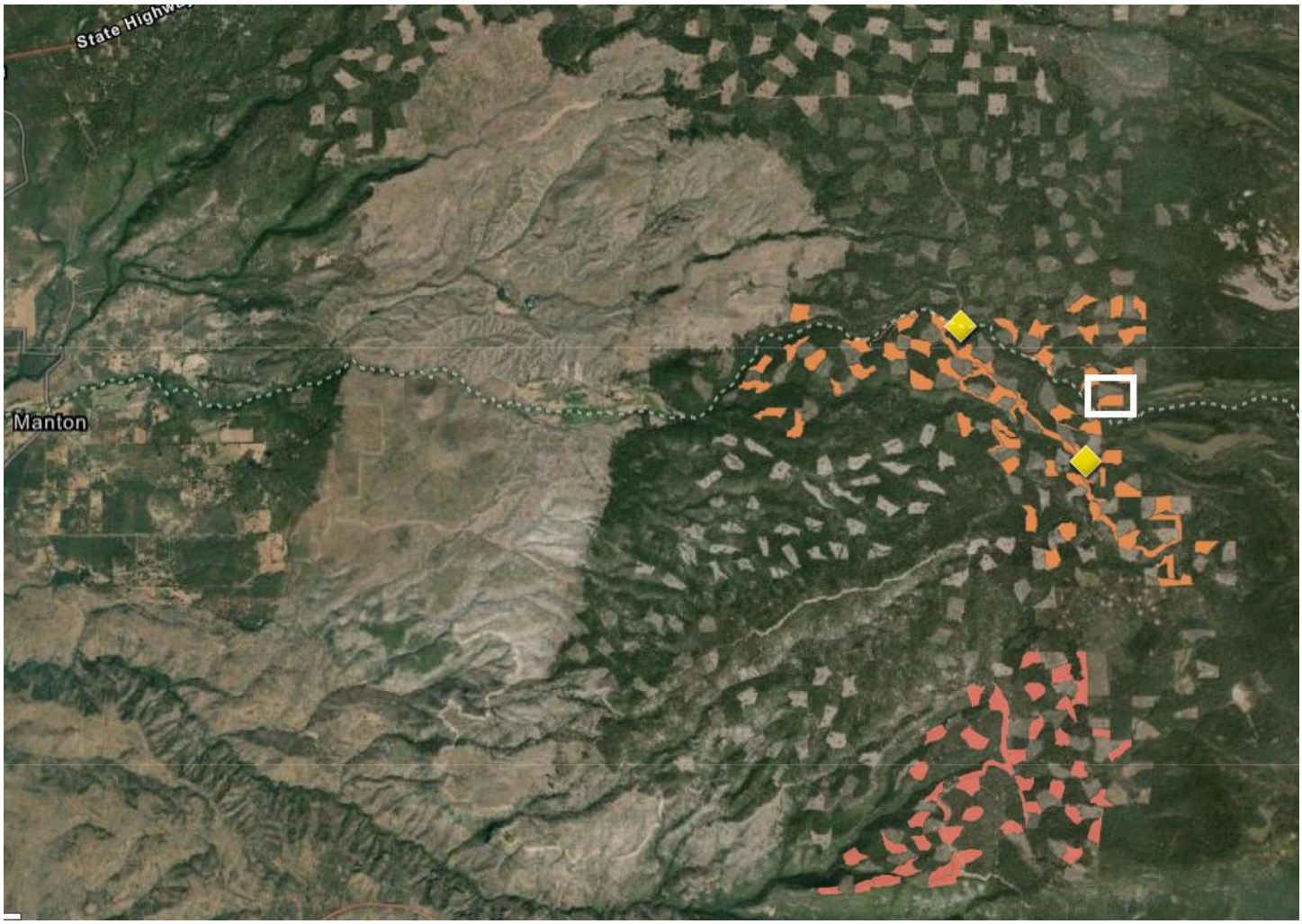

Fig. 5.

Figures 6 and 7 are photographs taken in May 2022 of the cut unit outlined by the white box in Figures 4 and 5. This unit was from the Willow Spring logging plan, filed in 2004. We don't know the exact year the unit was cut or replanted. It has mostly only small Ponderosa pines in it (no species diversity) and bare exposed soil with very few herbaceous plants.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Figure 8 is the boundary between the old unit and the proposed unit to the south. The small Ponderosa pines in the foreground are the tree plantation which replaced the former large trees and different species which are seen in the background. These units are at 5500' elevation. The trees in the uncut area include sugar pine, western white pine, red fir, white fir, and incense cedar. The original growth in this area was cut approximately 100 years ago, although there are individual large trees on the National Forest land. Most of the trees on the industrial timberland are second growth. The Ponderosa plantations are the third rotation in only a century, planted in soils that took 500 years to form, and planted during extreme weather and drought conditions that are worsening most years.

Figure 8.

Figure 9 are more of the trees in the area which will be cut if our lawsuits fail.

Fig. 9

Across the Forest Service's 17 Road from these units is Lassen Forest land, including the trail to Heart Lake, an area that has been proposed as a Wilderness area: https://www.calwild.org/heart-lake-national-rec-trail/

The difference in the plant diversity, habitat quality, and carbon sequestration is striking.

The industrial timberland is silent with no birdsong or insect sound. Across the road were seen and heard many species of birds, and many insects.

Birds we documented on the Lassen Forest land using the iphone app for bird identification called “The Cornell Lab: Merlin: Sound ID” were:

Evening grosbeak
Olive-sided flycatcher
Golden-crowned kinglet
Warbling vireo
Stellar’s jay
Hairy woodpecker
Hammond’s flycatcher
Cassin’s vireo
Western tanager
Wilson’s warbler
Yellow-rumped warbler

Herbaceous plant and habitat diversity, Figures 10 to 16. None of these plants are across the road in the industrial timberland plantations.

Fig. 10. A huge old cedar with fire scar.

Fig. 11. Field of corn lilies (*Veratrum californicum)*

Fig. 12. Stream violet (*Viola glabella)*

Fig. 13. Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa)*

Fig. 14. Nuttall's larkspur (*Delphinium nuttallianum* purple flower) and butterweed (*Senecio aronicoides , yellow)*

Fig. 15. Snow plant (*Sarcodes sanguinea)*

Fig. 16. A dead tree with large holes used for foraging and nesting by pileated woodpeckers. Pileated woodpeckers (and many other species) rely on large, standing dead trees and fallen logs—something that industrial logging usually eliminates.