

## **Including Burned Areas in the Wilderness Suitability Inventory A Sullivan Creek Case Study on the Flathead National Forest**

**Keith Hammer - June 6, 2014**

The following Google Earth map images demonstrate that wildfire renders many if not all units logged since 1974 no longer “substantially noticeable” using this imagery.

The term “substantially noticeable” is a key criterion used in “Chapter 70 - Wilderness Evaluation” of “FSH 1909.12 - Land Management Planning Handbook” and the Flathead National Forest “Process Paper for the Identification and Inventory of Lands That May be Suitable for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.”

The FNF Process Paper and interactive map for identifying and commenting on wilderness suitability determinations can be found at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/flathead/home/?cid=stelprdb5422786&width=full>

Flathead NF map layers referred to in the following can be downloaded at:

[http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/flathead/landmanagement/gis/?cid=fsm9\\_042517&width=full](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/flathead/landmanagement/gis/?cid=fsm9_042517&width=full)

Page 2 herein shows the Sullivan Creek area partly burned in the 2003 Ball Creek Fire. (Page 6 uses the Fire History map layer to identify the 2003 Ball Creek burned area).

Toggling with page 3 shows the harvest units logged from 1974 to present, within and outside the burned area (map layer Regen Harvest Since 1974), demonstrating the degree to which the fire rendered the logging units substantially not noticeable.

Page 4 adds in the Wilderness Inventory Draft May 2014 map layer, demonstrating how the 1974+ logging units disqualify areas as suitable for wilderness.

Page 5 shows only the Wilderness Inventory Draft May 2014 map layer so one can assess the difficulty of discerning the logging units inside the burned area.

Page 6 uses the Fire History map layer to identify the 2003 Ball Creek burned area.

Page 7 adds in the Wilderness Inventory Draft May 2014 map layer to simulate what the Wilderness Inventory would look like if burned areas were included because logging units are no longer “substantially noticeable.”

This Sullivan Creek case study is a preliminary look at one additional criterion the Flathead should use in its identification and inventory process. It is not intended to imply there are not more criteria to be considered nor that the “logging since 1974” criterion is itself either a good starting point nor not fatally flawed.

To view these maps in Google Earth, download our Sullivan Wildfire KML file at:

[http://www.swanview.org/home/articles/reports-documents/kml\\_files\\_for\\_use\\_with\\_google\\_earth/183](http://www.swanview.org/home/articles/reports-documents/kml_files_for_use_with_google_earth/183)

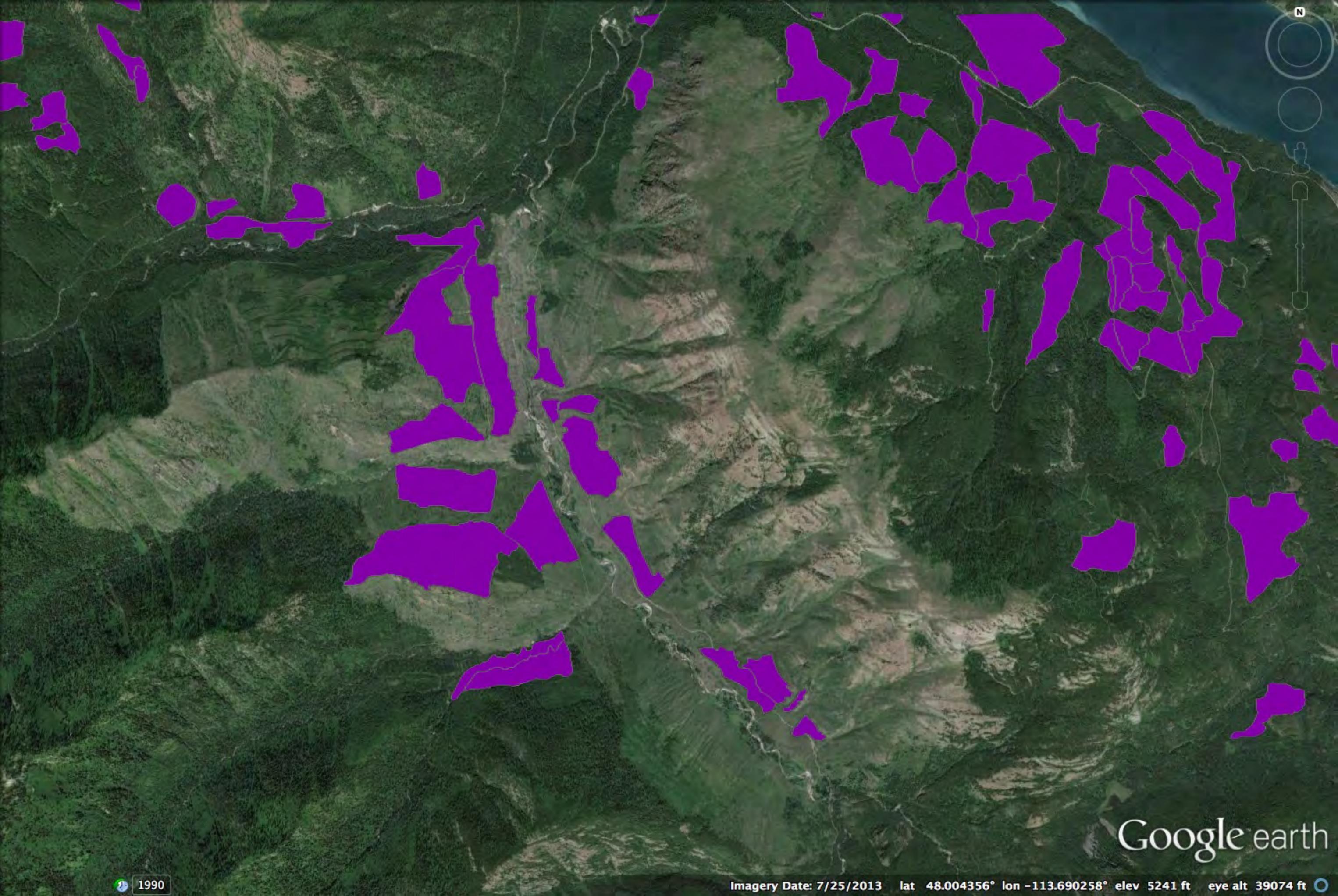
Comments and suggestions are welcome at [keith@swanview.org](mailto:keith@swanview.org) and 406-755-1379.



1990

Imagery Date: 7/25/2013 lat 48.004356° lon -113.690258° elev 5241 ft eye alt 39074 ft

Google earth



1990

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Google earth



Google earth

1990

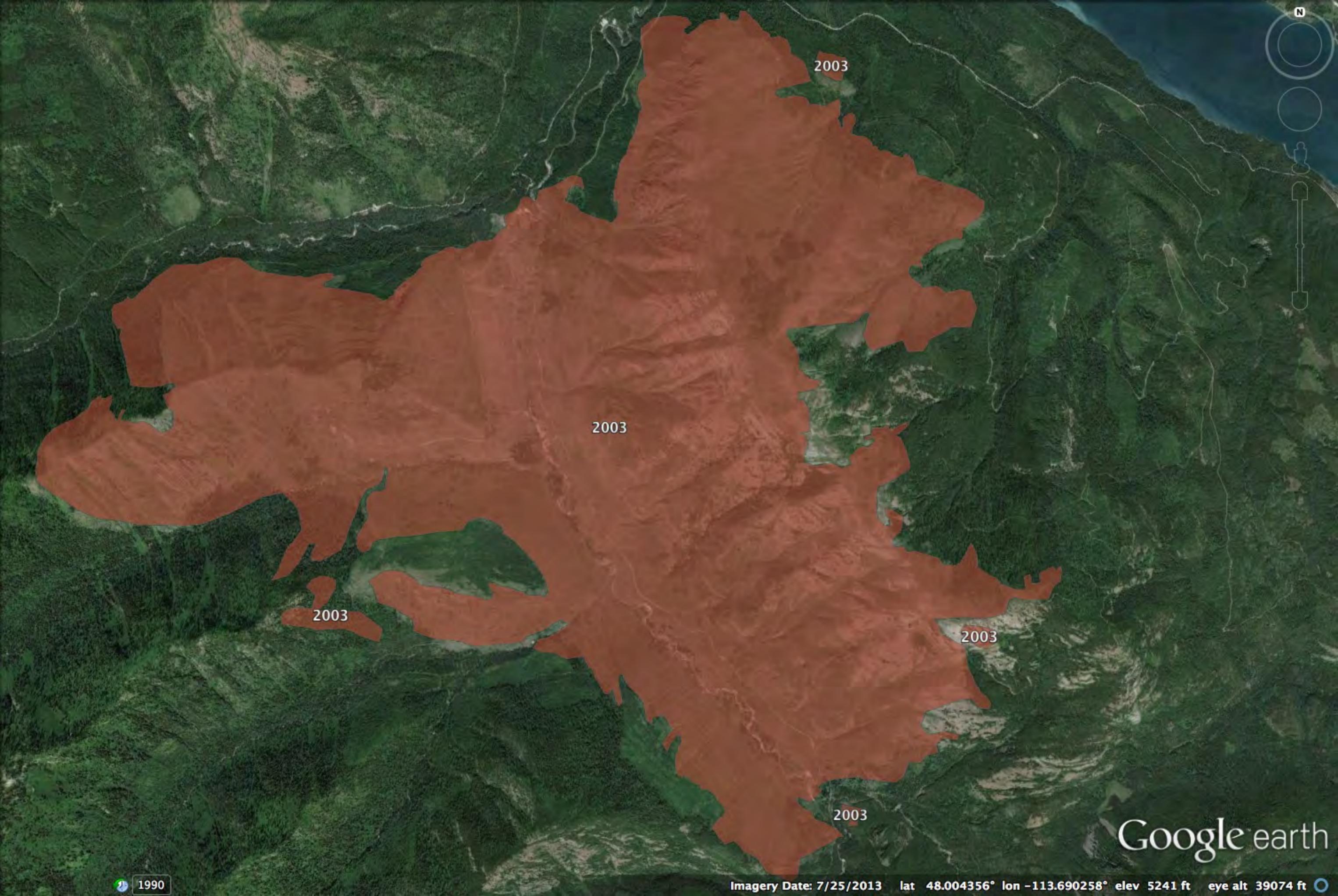
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Google earth

1990

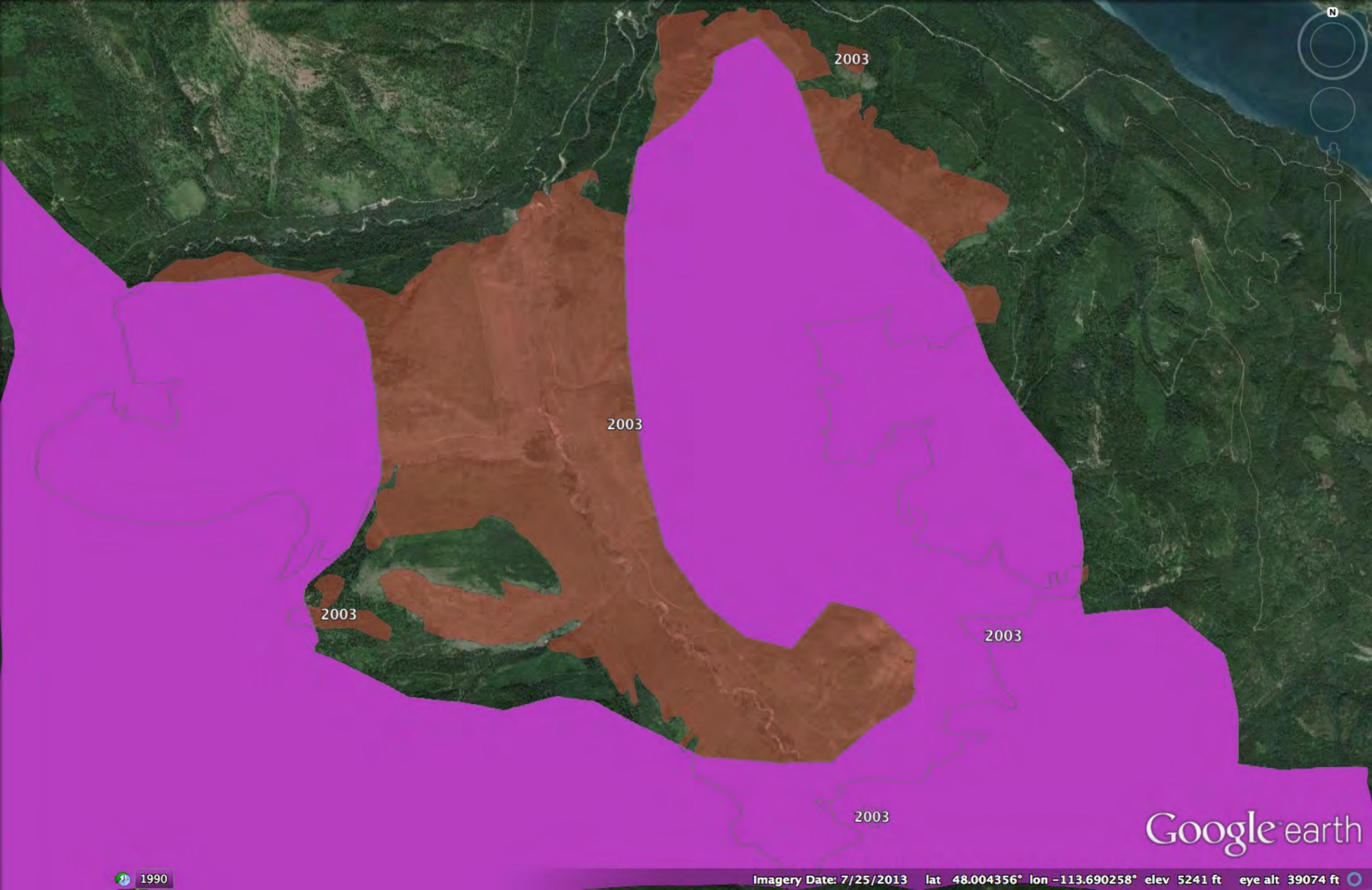
Imagery Date: 7/25/2013 lat 48.004356° lon -113.690258° elev 5241 ft eye alt 39074 ft



Google earth

1990

Imagery Date: 7/25/2013 lat 48.004356° lon -113.690258° elev 5241 ft eye alt 39074 ft



2003

2003

2003

2003

2003

Google earth

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Imagery Date: 7/25/2013 lat 48.004356° lon -113.690258° elev 5241 ft eye alt 39074 ft