

JD Lumber closing down in September

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PRIEST RIVER — Just like a tremor ripples through California after an earthquake, the news of JD Lumber closing spread quickly throughout Priest River and hit residents hard.

"Due to the continuing poor market for finished lumber, we have decided to accept an offer from Riley Creek Lumber to purchase our sawmill," wrote JD Lumber officials Jeff Weimer and Dave Slaughter in an open letter to the community sent to the Hagadone News Network. "We will cease operation of the JD Lumber mill effective September 2008."

Riley Creek is purchasing the sawmill plant, property, equipment and certain timber contracts, JD Lumber officials said. JD Lumber will retain its forestry staff and clerk to facilitate their log suppliers transition to Riley Creek.

In the letter, Slaughter and Wimer said future operations of the JD Lumber facility will be evaluated in the spring.

The pair thank employees and management team for all they have done as well as the community for its support following a 1996 fire, which put the mill out of operation for more than four months. During that time, employees were kept working to rebuild the mill.

JD Lumber officials noted the "excellent" working relationship with city, county and state officials and also thanked "the many, many real good, down-to-earth people that we deal with in our industry and call our friends."

JD Lumber officials estimate the mill has spent more than \$250,000 between Pend Oreille County, Wash., and Bonner County for community-oriented projects.

According to recent figures, more than 200 people are employed by JD Lumber. Employees were notified of the upcoming closure plans Friday afternoon.

Just 26 years ago, in 1982, JD Lumber Company was the only operating saw mill in Bonner County.

An expansion of the 60-acre mill took place during 2002-2003 when it added dry kilns, and a new boiler and sorting systems and new production equipment. JD Lumber spent millions of dollars upgrading during those two years.

Riley Creek Lumber Company recently merged with Bennett Forest Industries to strengthen ties to large customers including Home Depot, Inc., and Lowe's, as the market for lumber slumps. In a press release in June, both companies stated large home improvement retailers demand suppliers be large enough to guarantee delivery of lumber products. At that time, they noted that the merger could eventually lead to expanding the combined 550-person workforce at four mills located in northcentral and northern Idaho.

Riley Creek had already supplied the two retailers, but Bennett had not. Dick Bennett owns a third of the new company, and Marc Brinkmeyer, owner of Riley Creek Lumber, has the remaining two-thirds and is the chairman.

Riley Creek brought facilities in Chilco, Laclede and Moyie Springs to the table, while Bennett finished work two years ago on its modern mill in Grangeville in north-central Idaho. Having the four mills is helping the companies cut some transportation costs by scheduling deliveries to

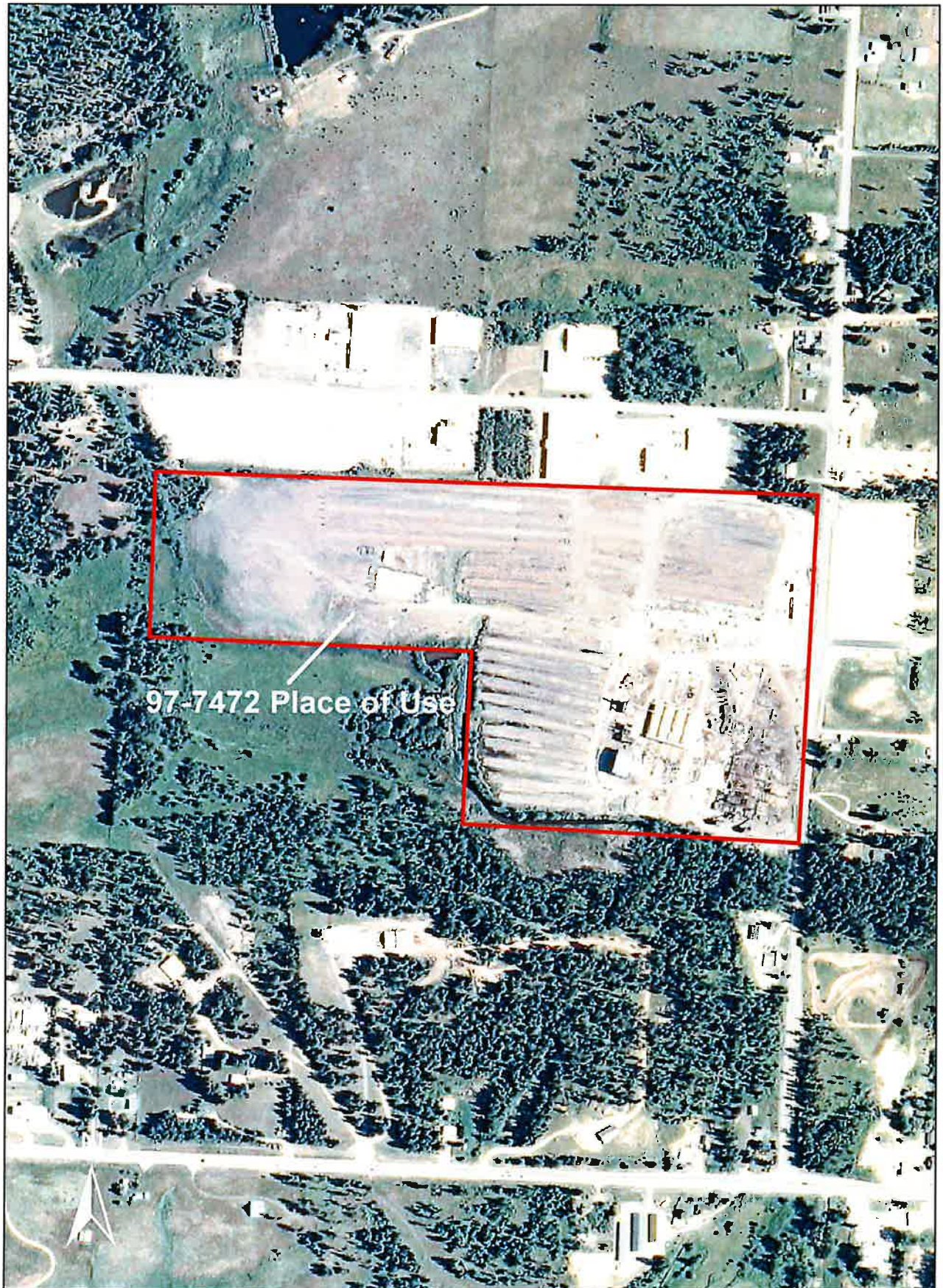
PLACE OF USE FOR CFPRBA CLAIM 97-7472

2004 AERIAL PHOTO



PLACE OF USE FOR CFPRBA CLAIM 97-7472

2009 AERIAL PHOTO



PLACE OF USE FOR CFPRBA CLAIM 97-7472

2011 AERIAL PHOTO



PLACE OF USE FOR CFPRBA CLAIM 97-7472

2013 AERIAL PHOTO



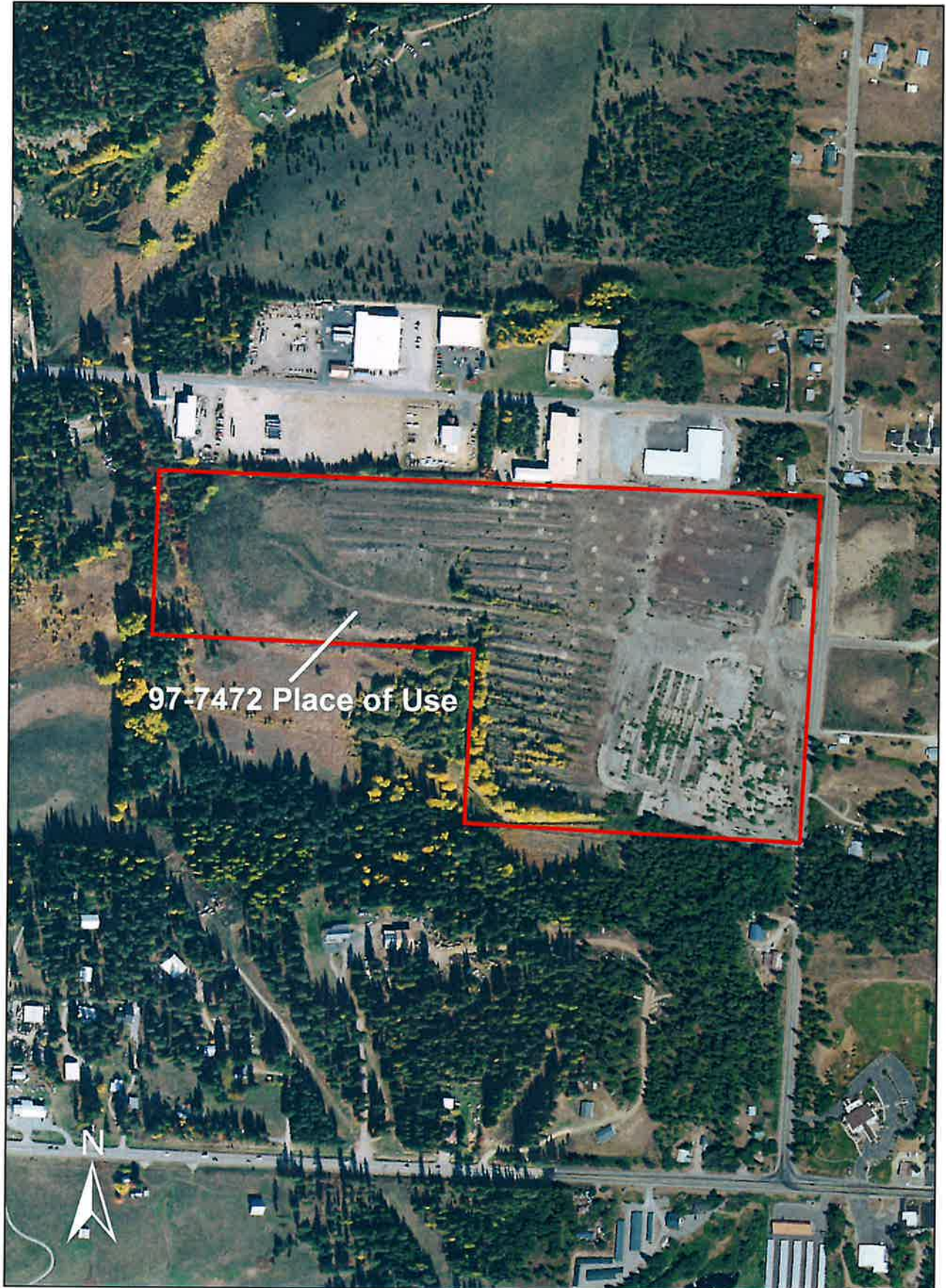
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