

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Lynn Nelson LUL for Hauling Logs
Proposed Implementation Date:	Winter 2020
Proponent:	Lynn Nelson
Location:	Section 36, Township 3 South, Range 17 West, (Common Schools Trust)
County:	Beaverhead County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Lynn Nelson has applied for a Land Use License to haul logs over an existing road on DNRC land in the Big Hole Valley, in Section 36, T3 South, Range 17 West. The request is to haul approximately 40 loads of logs on the road about 160 MBF. The road would be used during the winter when the road will be frozen, and snow covered. The activity would occur starting December 1, 2020 and conclude March 31, 2021.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Beaverhead County Commissioners
MT Fish Wildlife and Parks Wildlife Biologist
Lessee
DNRC Archeologist

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

No other permits needed of other government agencies with jurisdiction.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

A. **Action Alternative:** Issue a Land Use License (LUL) to Lynn Nelson for the hauling of logs over an existing road on DNRC land in Section 36, T3S R17W.

B. **No Action Alternative:** Deny issuing a Land Use License (LUL) to Lynn Nelson for the hauling of logs over an existing road on DNRC land in Section 36, T3S R17W.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Action Alternative: The existing road is located on an area with mostly flat of very moderate slope. There are not especially unusual or unique geological features in the proposed road location. The road is comprised primarily of Waldbillig-basalt-Upsata families, complex, glacial moraines that are moderately suited for log hauling. BMPs would be implemented into the license as mitigation measures to prevent erosion and soil disturbance. Snow would need to be plowed during the winter to keep it open for travel. No short, long term or

cumulative effects would be anticipated from the use of the road to haul 40 loads of logs over it during frozen conditions.

No Action Alternative: No changes to geology or soil conditions would occur under this alternative.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Action Alternative: This parcel is in the Moose Creek watershed, which is a tributary to the Bighole River in the Missouri River Basin. The Class I [as defined by 77-5-301(1) MCA] mainstream of Moose Creek flows through the proposed section. The haul road is nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the stream. The State parcel also contains numerous active and abandoned irrigation ditches and depressional wetlands (potholes).

The State has adopted BMPs through its Nonpoint Source Management Plan as the principle means of controlling nonpoint source pollution from log hauling activities.

Downstream beneficial uses in the affected watershed include irrigation, livestock watering, and coldwater fisheries. There are numerous existing water rights for irrigation and livestock watering immediately downstream of the proposed project area. This proposal does not impact Moose Creek or the irrigation ditches that flow from the stream. No long term or cumulative impacts to water quality would be anticipated from implementation of this LUL.

No Action Alternative: No changes to water quality would occur under this alternative.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Action Alternative: This proposal is located within Montana Airshed 7 which encompasses portions of Beaverhead and Madison Counties. The use of the road for hauling logs will have no impacts to air quality in the Wisdom, MT area.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to air quality would occur under this alternative.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Action Alternative: Vegetation consists of Lodgepole pine, pine grass, and grouse whortleberry. No rare plants were identified during a NRIS search of the area. The road doesn't currently have vegetation on it and use of the road will not disturb vegetation in the surrounding area. The spread of noxious weeds from the use of mechanized equipment and ground disturbance would be minimized, but not completely eliminated, by washing of equipment before entering the site, weed spraying on roads before and after harvesting (ARM 36.11.445), and grass seeding disturbed areas and after final blading would be incorporated into the license as a mitigation measure.

No Action Alternative: No changes to vegetation would occur under this alternative.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Action Alternative: The project area provides suitable habitat for a variety of wildlife and bird species. The area is home to moose, elk, deer and bears. Use of the road in the winter may displace large ungulates in the area. Road use activities however would be of short duration (several months) and would impact a relatively small

area. Given these factors, minor adverse direct, secondary and cumulative effects to terrestrial and avian species would not be anticipated from this alternative.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Action Alternative: An NRIS search revealed the following species of concern within the project vicinity.

Grizzly Bears:

The proposed project area lies outside of any grizzly bear recovery area and defined Non-Recovery Occupied Habitat (Wittinger 2002). The nearest portion of Non-recovery Occupied Habitat lies over 80 air miles southeast of the project area and the nearest recovery area is the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (USFWS 1993) is situated approximately 100 miles east of the project area. No new permanent roads would be constructed for this project. Adverse direct, secondary and cumulative impacts to grizzly bears as a result of this project are expected to be minimal.

Wolverine:

Suitable denning habitat for wolverines generally found at high elevation forest and Alpine habitat type capable of holding heavy snow in late spring is not present on the project area or within a mile of the project area. No adverse direct, secondary or cumulative effects to wolverines would be expected to occur as a result of this project.

Suitable denning habitat for wolverines generally found at high elevation forest and Alpine habitat type capable of holding heavy snow in late spring is not present on the project area or within a mile of the project area. No adverse direct, secondary or cumulative effects to wolverines would be expected to occur as a result of this project. This project area is either out of the range of the normal distribution for this species or suitable habitat is not present. Thus, no direct, secondary, or cumulative effects would be anticipated.

Wolves:

Wolves could occasionally use and travel through the project area, however, given the small size and short duration of the project, no appreciable direct, secondary or cumulative effects to wolves would not be anticipated.

Greater Sage Grouse:

This parcel is located within General Sage Grouse Habitat and consultation with the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program was conducted. No new roads would be built, or ground disturbance would occur. Given the type of the project, location of the project, and timing of the project minimal risk of direct, secondary or cumulative effects to sage grouse is anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No changes to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources would occur if this alternative is chosen.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Action Alternative: A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the Area of Potential Effect (APE). This review entailed the inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed project.

No Action Alternative: No changes to historical and archaeological sites would occur.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The Action Alternative: No changes to the aesthetics of the project area would occur because of the proposal. There would be no changes to cover or prominent topographic features, the surrounding area would remain the same.

No Action: No changes to aesthetics would occur under this alternative.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will increase the demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

An EA was completed for a timber sale that took place on the section in the summer and fall of 2018. The EA was completed in July of 2017. The clearing of an irrigation will take place on the section in 2021.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Action Alternative: The hauling of logs over the existing road may present a health and safety concerns to the general public that may be using the road. The road is a designated open road. As a mitigation measure the licensee will be responsible for placing "Log Truck Hauling" on the road as a safety precaution for the public.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to health and safety would occur under this alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will impact industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities or production on the state section.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

Action Alternative: This alternative will allow the licensee to continue logging his Forest Service timber sale while the FS haul road is closed during the winter months. Allowing the use of the road will provide the logger and his employees employment over the winter months.

No Action Alternative: This alternative will require the logger to shut down over the winter months and resume work on his FS timber sale to resume in July 2021.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Neither of the proposed alternative will change the local and state tax revenues.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will affect the demand for government services in the local area.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Neither alternative will change, or impact locally adopted environmental services in the surrounding area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Action Alternative: Having the road open and plowed during the winter months will provide recreational access to Forest Service land south of the state section during the winter of 2020-2021.

No Action Alternative: The Forest service lands south of the state section will remain open for recreation under this alternative however access will be more difficult not having the road plowed.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

No changes to density and distribution of population and housing would occur under either of the proposed alternatives.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No changes to social structures and mores would occur under either of the proposed alternatives.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

No changes to cultural uniqueness and diversity would occur under either of the proposed alternatives.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Action Alternative: This alternative would generate \$480 for the common school trust.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would not generate any revenue for the common schools trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Timothy Egan	Date: 10/8/2020
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action Alternative: Issue a Land Use License (LUL) to Lynn Nelson for the hauling of logs over an existing road on DNRC land in Section 36, T3S R17W.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:


No long-term or cumulative impacts to the area would be anticipated from the proposal. The road would be used under frozen snow covered conditions, and the use would be of a short duration and in a confined area. Mitigation measures include following DNRC BMP's to reduce any long-term impacts. Licensee will be required to put up Log Truck Hauling signs to reduce health and safety concerns to the public.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Andy Burgoyne	
	Title: Trust Land Program Manager, Central Land Office	
Signature:		Date: 19/8/2020

Moose Creek LUL
East 1/2 Section 36, T3S, R17W, Beaverhead County



— Moose Creek Road LUL - 5968 feet

Montana State Library Geographic Information