

## CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION FOR DNRC FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

**Project Name:** Woods Hazard Tree & Fuels Reduction Timber Permit

**Proposed Implementation Date:** June 2015

**Proponent:** Ken Wood, 3588 Bear Canyon Rd, Bozeman, MT

**Type and Purpose of Action:** The proposed project would perform hazard tree removal within close proximity of a private home and additional hazardous fuels reductions within the adjoining State lands surrounding the private home. Up to 12 thousand board feet of Douglas-fir, spruce, and lodgepole pine sawlog timber would be harvested from approximately 2.2 acres of State land. The project would incorporate group selection and selection harvest methods utilizing mechanical and tractor harvest systems. The project would utilize existing road on private and State lands. The proposed project would be scheduled to start June 2015. The specific project objectives are to remove identified hazardous trees to existing structures; reduce the hazardous fuels loading within the immediate surrounding forest through the removal of overstocked trees; improve the health, vigor, and fire resistance of the treated stand and provide revenue to the Normal School trust and the School of Mines trust.

**Location:** E2SE4NE4 Section 1, Township 3 South, Range 6 East; W2SW4NW4 Section 36, Township 3 South, Range 7 East

**County:** Gallatin

**Category (refer to ARM 36.11.447 for additional detail):**

- 1) Temporary Uses of Land with Negligible Effects
- 2) Plans and Policies
- 3) Leases and Licenses
- 4) Acquisition of Land or Interest in Land
- 5) Road Maintenance and Repair
- 6) Bridges and Culverts
- 7) Crossing Class 3 Streams
- 8) Temporary Road Use Permits
- 9) Road Closure
- 10) Material Stockpiles
- 11) Backfilling
- 12) Gathering Forest Products for Personal Use
- 13) Regeneration
- 14) Nursery Operations
- 15) Water Wells
- 16) Herbicides and Pesticides
- 17) Other Hazardous Materials
- 18) Fences
- 19) Waterlines
- 20) Removal of Small Trees
- 21) Removal of Hazardous Trees
- 22) Cone Collection
- 23) Timber Harvest (<100 MBF green or 500 MBF salvage)

By process of the adoption of the Administrative Rules for Forest Management on February 27, 2003, pursuant to ARM 36.2.523(5)(a), the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Trust Land Management Division, has adopted the above categorical exclusions for activities conducted on state forest lands. "Categorical Exclusion" refers to a type of action that does not individually, collectively, or cumulatively require an EA or EIS unless extraordinary circumstances occur (ARM 36.2.522(5)).

**Extraordinary Circumstances:**

Will the proposed action affect one or more of the following resources or situations in the project area? If the resource or situation is present, but project design avoids potential adverse effects on the resource, the answer is "no". One "Yes" answer indicates that Categorical Exclusion is not appropriate for the project, and an EA or EIS must be conducted.

- | YES                      | NO                                  |  |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 1) Sites with high erosion risk.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 2) Federally listed threatened and endangered species or critical habitat for threatened and endangered species as designated by the USFWS.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 3) Municipal watersheds.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 4) The SMZ of fish bearing streams or lakes, except for modification or replacement of bridges, culverts and other crossing structures.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 5) State natural area.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 6) Native American religious and cultural sites.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 7) Archaeological sites.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 8) Historic properties and areas.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 9) Several related projects that individually may be subject to categorical exclusion but that may occur at the same time or in the same geographic area. Such related actions may be subject to environmental review even if they are not individually subject to review. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 10) Violations of any applicable state or federal laws or regulations.   |

The project listed above meets the definition of the indicated categorical exclusion, including specified conditions and extraordinary circumstances, as provided in the Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.447).

Prepared by: Chuck Barone  
(Name)

May 27, 2015  
(Date)

Decision by: Craig Campbell  
(Name)

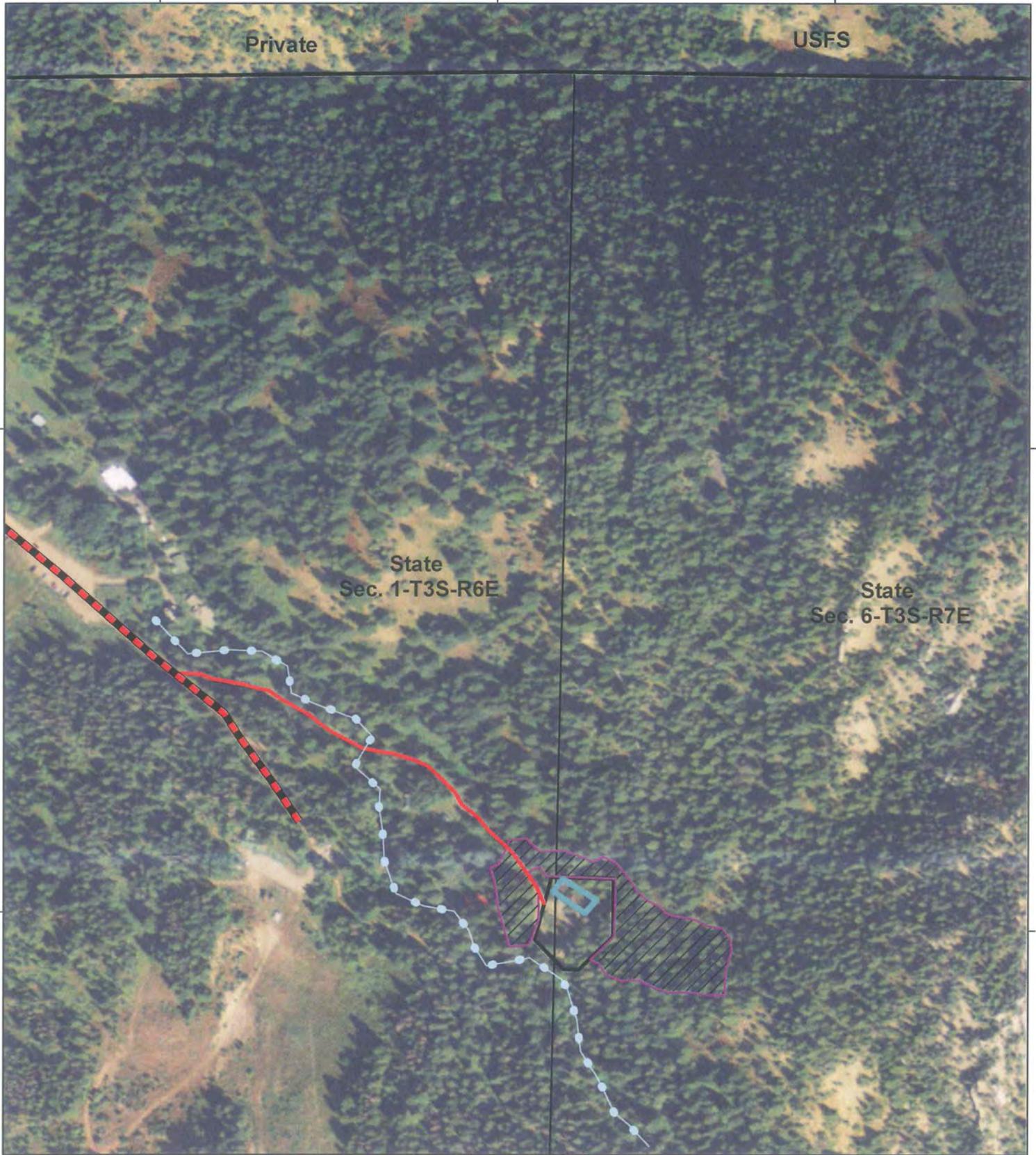
Bozeman Unit Manager  
(Title)

  
(Signature)

6/2/2015  
(Date)

ATTACHMENT A  
Woods Hazard Tree and Fuels Reduction  
Sections 1-T3S-R6E and 6-T3S-R7E  
Gallatin County, Montana

110°55'0"W

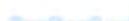


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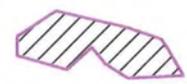
 Bear Canyon Road

 Access Road

 Stream

 Woods Property

 House

 Treatment Area



110°55'0"W

## ATTACHMENT B

### Vegetative Analysis/Stand Prescription Woods Hazard Tree and Fuels Reduction Timber Permit

The State parcels are located on the north edge of the Gallatin Mountain Range at the edge of the urban interface. The State parcels are dominated by Douglas-fir on the south-facing aspects and mixed conifer species on the north-facing aspects. Within the treatment area slopes range from 10-50% with an elevation range of 5400-5600 feet. The cover type is Douglas-fir and the habitat type is Douglas-fir/Ninebark (Psme/Phma).

Forested stands are included in fire group six with Douglas-fir the climax species. Site is moist with heavy undergrowth of ninebark, alder and aspen regeneration. The mean fire interval ranges from 35 to 45 years. Fuel loadings are typically 13 tons/ac or more. Historically, fire thinned sapling and pole stands with ground fire maintaining mature stands in a more open, park-like condition. Mixed-severity events maintained mature stands in scattered patches and a more open condition.

The absence of fire, in combination with encroachment, has resulted in heavily stocked stands with high concentrations of ladder fuels. These conditions make the stands more susceptible to fire and attack from insects and disease.

#### **Stand Prescription:**

Trees of all age and size classes exhibiting signs of insect/disease, poor health and/or poor tree form characteristics would be prioritized for removal. Additionally, overall stand density would be reduced by up to 55% of the merchantable volume utilizing group selection/selection harvests. Submerchantable trees and shrubs would be removed to reduce ladder fuels. Treatment would emulate moderate to severe ground fire.

Majority of slash would be consolidated at intermediate landings and burned. Natural regeneration would be expected. No rare plants or cover types have been noted by the Montana Natural Heritage Program or observed within the proposed project area.

#### Section 1-T3S-R6E (0.6 ac) and Section 6-T3S-R7E (1.6 ac):

Treatment Unit (2.2 ac/12 MBF): Unit is dominated by Douglas fir with some scattered lodgepole pine and spruce. Ninebark, alder and aspen regeneration are prevalent throughout most of the treatment area. Diameter size ranges from 9-26", heights for dominants/co-dominants from 55-70' and an age range from 120-150 years. The unit stocking is moderate to heavy.

Identified hazardous trees to existing structures would be removed and the hazardous fuels loading within the treatment unit would be reduced. Group selection and individual selection harvests would be utilized to reduce stand density and fuels within the sawtimber component of unit, targeting trees exhibiting poor health as first priority. The sub-merchantable trees and shrubs (ladder fuels) would be removed. Desirable dominate/co-dominate trees would be left for seed source. One large snag or snag recruit ( $\geq 21$ " dbh or next available size) per acre would be left where available.

The majority of slash within the treatment unit would be consolidated at intermediate landings for burning.

Harvesting an estimated 12 MBF of saw timber would alter the forest cover on approximately 2.2 total acres. Due to the size, duration and harvest method of the proposed project and additional recommended mitigation measures, any impacts to vegetative communities and cover due to prescribed treatments are expected to be minor and temporary.

#### MEASURES RECOMMENDED TO MITIGATE POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

- 1) Compliance with Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP's), Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) laws, the Montana Stream Protection Act, Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) requirements and applicable DNRC Forest Management Administrative Rules.
- 2) Limit equipment operations to periods when soils are dry (less than 20% soil moisture), frozen or snow covered (12 inches packed or 18 inches unconsolidated) to minimize soil compaction, rutting, vegetative disturbance and maintain drainage features. Control erosion by installing adequate drainage on roads and skid trails.
- 3) The Forest Officer shall approve a plan for felling, yarding and landing location in each harvest unit prior to the start of operations in the unit. The locations and spacing of skid trails and landings shall be designated and approved by the Forest Officer prior to operations and skid trails will not be spaced less than 50 feet. Minimize soil disturbance by general skid trail planning and limit sustained tractor skidding to slopes  $\leq 45\%$  throughout the entire project. Limit scarification to 30-40% of the harvest area.
- 4) Slash would be distributed on skid trails upon completion of use to control erosion.
- 5) For slope stability on the road construction segments, construct cutslopes at 1:1 (run/rise) in common material and 1/4:1 for rock. Install adequate road drainage to control erosion concurrent with harvest activities, road opening and new construction. Provide effective sediment filtration along drainage features near crossing sites. New construction and major skid trails on State lands would be closed with slash and debris and/or barriers, and adequate drainage provided.
- 6) All road and logging equipment would be power washed and inspected prior to being brought on site. Sale area would be monitored for weeds following harvest and a treatment plan would be developed should noxious weeds occur.
- 7) At sale closure, grass seed skid trails (where needed) and landings with an appropriate weed free seed mixture.
- 8) One snag and one snag recruit per acre, of the largest diameter class, would be retained where applicable. Cull live trees and cull snags would be retained where applicable.
- 9) Contact DNRC wildlife biologist should any threatened or endangered species be encountered within the proposed project area.

**ATTACHMENT F**  
**WOODS HAZARD TREE AND FUELS REDUCTION TIMBER PERMIT**

CHECKLIST FOR ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND SENSITIVE SPEICES  
CENTRAL LAND OFFICE

Prepared by Chuck Barone

6/2/15

<b>Threatened and Endangered Species</b>	<b>Potential for Impacts and Rationale</b>
<p>Canada Lynx (<i>Lynx canadensis</i>)  Habitat: dense spruce/fir forest supporting snowshoe hares.</p>	<p>[Y/N] Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures  N = Not Present or No Impact is Likely to Occur  Y = Impacts May Occur (Explain Below)</p> <p>[ N ] The proposed project area is located within the Wildland/Urban Interface along the fringes of preferred lynx habitat. The project is directly adjacent to a private home within an active home site area and a quarter-mile from major public recreational use access sites. Suitable lynx habitat is present on the project area, and Lynx could occasionally use the project area. However, habitats high in coarse woody debris that is preferred for denning, and large acreages of dense conifer regeneration at high elevations that are preferred for foraging are not well represented in the project area. Lynx habitat is marginal due to anthropogenically induced fragmentation and location within a high recreational use area. Under the proposed action 2.2 acres are proposed for treatment and would be converted to temporary non-habitat. The predominant forest cover types within the project area typically do not contain high horizontal cover comprised of subalpine and spruce bows. Considering the limited presence of several habitat attributes within the project area that are known to be important for lynx and snowshoe hares (e.g. dense overstory canopy, dense shrubs and downed logs), habitat in this area is likely best suited as travel habitat or matrix habitat that would facilitate movement, linkage, and provide habitat for secondary prey species such as red squirrels. Preferred lynx habitat is marginal within the proposed project area due to the lack of highly desirable habitat conditions for lynx and their primary prey, snowshoe hares, and very close</p>

	<p>proximity to active home sites. Adverse direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to lynx as a result of this project are expected to be minor.</p>
<p>Gray Wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>)  Habitat: ample big game pops., security from human activity</p>	<p>[ N ] No known denning or rendezvous sites occur within 1 mile of the project area. However, wolves may occasionally use the project area and occasional sightings have been noted in the area. Minimal risk of direct, indirect or cumulative effects that would result in harm to wolves would be anticipated under either of the alternatives considered. If wolves or an active den site were detected in the immediate area, operations would cease, and a DNRC biologist would be consulted. Appropriate mitigations would be developed and applied prior to resuming activities.</p>
<p>Grizzly Bear (<i>Ursus arctos</i>)  Habitat: recovery areas, security from human activity</p>	<p>[ N ] The proposed project area lies outside of any grizzly bear recovery area. The nearest recovery area is the GYE grizzly bear recovery zone situated ~21 miles south of the project area. Grizzly bear use of the extreme northern Gallatin Mountains may occur, and the project area is currently considered within the occupied habitat boundary defined by Wittinger (2002). Potential riparian habitat for grizzly bears is present within the project area. Human access levels are presently high area as the project area is directly adjacent to a private home and within an active home site area, and within a quarter-mile of major public recreational use access sites. No new road would be constructed to access the proposed treatment area. Although the majority of screening cover would be removed within the treatment unit, due to the small size of the affected area (2.2 ac) and project location, no impacts to bears are anticipated. In associate with activities, food storage measures would also be required and firearms restrictions would be applied. Proposed project activities would not occur from March 15 - June 10 to minimize risk to bears in the spring period. The potential for any measurable increases in bear-human conflicts following the project activities are expected to be negligible. Adverse direct, indirect and cumulative</p>

	impacts to bears as a result of this project are expected to be negligible.
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<b>DNRC Sensitive Species</b>	[Y/N] Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures N = Not Present or No Impact is Likely to Occur Y = Impacts May Occur (Explain Below)
<p>Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) Habitat: late-successional forest &lt;1 mile from open water</p>	<p>[ N ] No bald eagle nests, feeding areas, roosting areas or suitable nesting habitat occur within 1 mile of the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to bald eagles would be anticipated under either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Black-Backed Woodpecker (<i>Picoides arcticus</i>) Habitat: mature to old burned forest</p>	<p>[ N ] No recent burns within the last 5 years occur on the project area or within 1 mile of the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to black-backed woodpeckers would be anticipated under either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Black-tailed Prairie Dog (<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>) Habitat: Prairie, shortgrass prairie, badlands</p>	<p>[ N ] Black-tailed prairie dogs have not been documented in the project area or surrounding vicinity (MNHP/FWP Montana Field Guide -- search 5/19/15). No grassland habitat suitable for use by black-tailed prairie dogs occurs in or near the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to prairie dogs would be anticipated under either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Flammulated Owl (<i>Otus flammeolus</i>) Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and Doug.-fir forest</p>	<p>[ N ] The project area occurs on the fringe of the distribution of flammulated owls in Montana, and warm forest types suitable for use by flammulated owls do not occur in or near the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to flammulated owls would be anticipated under either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Greater Sage-grouse (<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>) Habitat: sagebrush semi-desert</p>	<p>[ N ] No occurrence records for greater sage grouse exist for the quarter-latitude containing the project area since 1991 (MNHP/FWP Montana Field Guide -- search 5/15, and MNHP 2015). Also, extensive stands of sagebrush community types do not occur within or near the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to greater sage grouse would be anticipated under either of the alternatives considered.</p>

<p>Harlequin Duck (<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>) Habitat: white-water streams, boulder and cobble substrates</p>	<p>[ N ] No known streams supporting harlequin ducks occur within or near the project area, and no recent observations (within the last 17 years) have been reported for the general area (MNHP/FWP Montana Field Guide -- search 5/15, and MNHP 2015). Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to harlequin ducks would be anticipated for either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Mountain Plover (<i>Charadrius montanus</i>) Habitat: short-grass prairie, alkaline flats, prairie dog towns</p>	<p>[ N ] No grassland habitat suitable for use by mountain plovers occurs within or near the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to mountain plovers would be anticipated under either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Northern Bog Lemming (<i>Synaptomys borealis</i>) Habitat: sphagnum meadows, bogs, fens with thick moss mats</p>	<p>[ N ] No sphagnum meadows, bogs or fens occur within or near the project area, and the project area occurs outside of the known distribution of northern bog lemmings in Montana (MNHP/FWP Montana Field Guide -- search 5/19/15). Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to bog lemmings would be anticipated for either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) Habitat: cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands</p>	<p>[ N ] No cliff features or suitable foraging areas occur within 0.75 miles of the project area, and no known nest sites occur within or near the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to peregrine falcons would be anticipated for either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Pileated Woodpecker (<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>) Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest</p>	<p>[ N ] The project area occurs outside of the normal distribution of pileated woodpeckers in Montana. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to pileated woodpeckers would be anticipated for either of the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (<i>Plecotus townsendii</i>) Habitat: caves, caverns, old mines</p>	<p>[ N ] No caves, caverns, or old mines suitable for use by bats occur within 1 mile of the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to Townsend's big-eared bats would be anticipated for either of the alternatives considered.</p>

\*Montana National Heritage Program/ FWP Montana Field Guide 2015. National Heritage Tracker 2015.