

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CONSERVATION

Northwestern Land Office - Swan Unit

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STATE OF MONTANA

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DECISION NOTICE
Wood Lion Multiple Timber Sale Project
September 18, 2017

INTRODUCTION

I have reviewed all the information and comments received during the preparation of the Wood Lion Multiple Timber Sale Project.

I have reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), including comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and the responses to those comments as presented in the FEIS.

I have compared the alternatives to the project objectives and evaluated their advantages and disadvantages.

I have reviewed each identified issue and the analysis of environmental effects for each alternative displayed in the FEIS.

I have carefully compared the Proposed Decision with philosophy and direction contained within Department policies, the State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP), the Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARMs), and the DNRC Forested Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan.

DECISION

I have chosen to implement Action Alternative B, as described in the *FEIS PROPOSED DECISION (FEIS, Chapter II, pages 51 through 62)* without modification. Action Alternative B would implement all recommended mitigations in the Wood Lion Multiple Timber Sale Project FEIS.

Action Alternative B consists of several timber sales and smaller permits totaling 24.13 million board feet (MMbf), spread over a 3 to 5 year period. If harvested over a three-year period, this project would represent approximately 12 percent of the state's harvest for the years of 2018 through 2021.

Instead of doing analysis for each individual timber sale, the FEIS was designed to analyze and display the cumulative effects for multiple timber sales, resulting in a more complete and accurate effects analysis.

Action Alternative B meets the *PURPOSE AND NEED* for the proposed action and *PROJECT OBJECTIVES (FEIS Chapter I, page 2)* as displayed within the FEIS PROPOSED DECISION. The proposed mitigations are adequate and feasible. In addition, Action Alternative B complies

with the philosophy of the SFLMP and all department policies, state laws, and administrative rules.

Overall, Action Alternative B strikes the best balance between protection of ecological values and addressing insect and disease problems with revenue generation for the Common School Trust. Action Alternative B earns \$72,857 more in total trust revenue, or about \$117 more per acre treated than Action Alternative C. Stands with the greatest amounts of mortality are identified for harvest with treatments that focus on providing for the best long-term forest health and vigor. Action Alternative B captures potential value loss by treating 241 more acres of high-risk old growth than Action Alternative C. In addition, the proposed project and harvest treatments move Swan River State Forest toward desired future conditions while limiting effects to other valuable resources such as watersheds, wildlife, and soils. Action Alternative B moves 679 more acres into the 0- to 39-year age class, and 120 less acres of mixed-conifer cover type into western white pine, western larch/Douglas fir, and lodgepole pine cover types than does Action Alternative C. This moves Swan River State Forest towards how age classes and cover types were historically represented on the general landscape. Action Alternative B uses 5 fewer miles of existing road, and builds 3 fewer miles of new road than does Action Alternative C. Action Alternative B maintains 10 more acres of grizzly bear secure habitat than does Action Alternative C mainly due to reduced miles of new road construction.

Because of the above-mentioned reasons, Action Alternative B best complies with the Department's legal requirement to manage these lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions.

The complete rationale for choosing Action Alternative B is displayed in the *FEIS PROPOSED DECISION (FEIS, Chapter II, pages 51 through 62)*.

Upon execution of this decision, I will recommend that the first Wood Lion Timber Sale Project Contracts be submitted to the Board of Land Commissioners for approval.

Thank you,



Greg Poncin
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