

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CONSERVATION
Forestry Division



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STATE OF MONTANA

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Scoping Notice:

July 7th, 2020

The Forestry Division of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is proposing to offer financial assistance to mitigate the risk from bark beetles to forested lands in Mount Ascension Natural Park near Helena (46.557791 Decimal Degrees North, 112.039197 Decimal Degrees West). Through a partnership with the US Forest Service Forest Health Protection program, these funds are applied for and awarded through the DNRC's Western Bark Beetle/Protection, Suppression, and Restoration grants.

Fire suppression efforts over the past century coupled with past management practices and forest growth have led to forest conditions throughout Montana that are susceptible to bark beetle infestation. Grant funds from this program support reducing stocking levels in pursuit of more resilient forest conditions now and into the future.

Located southwest of the peak of Mount Ascension in the Dry Gulch drainage, the purpose of the proposed project is to reduce bark beetle risk by thinning overstocked stands on approximately 25 acres of forested land. Thinning, chipping, and pile burning are the proposed management methods for this project. The area is predominately ponderosa pine overstory with an overstocked understory of Douglas-fir. The DNRC would administer these grant funds directly to the City of Helena through a project agreement. The project would be implemented in the summer of 2020 and completed by the end of 2021. If funded, the prescription would be to selectively remove trees, reducing stocking levels and the likelihood of bark beetle infestation.

The proposed action, *to award grant funding*, would contribute to the DNRC meeting goals and objectives identified in Forests in Focus 2.0 and the Montana Forest Action Plan. The DNRC invites your comment on the proposed action in order to comply with the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). Please respond by end of business August 7th, 2020 to:

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