

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Trust Lands Management Division • Central Land Office • Dillon

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Initial Proposal Sweet and Sour Timber Permit March 24, 2021

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Dillon Unit is proposing to harvest timber on the following state-owned parcel:

Section 36, Township 8 south, Range 7 west

The proposed Sweet and Sour Timber Permit is located approximately 15 air miles southeast of Dillon, Montana in Madison County.

The primary objectives of the proposed project are:

- Reduce conifer encroachment in sage-steppe ecosystem.
- Capture diminishing value of dying and dead timber.
- Improve stand resilience and vigor.
- Contribute to the annual targets of timber harvest volumes of DNRC and the Central Land Office. DNRC is required by state law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) to advertise for sale approximately 57.6 million board feet (MMbf) of timber annually and produce revenue.
- Generate revenue for the Common Schools Trust.

The project would harvest up to 300 thousand board feet (Mbf) of timber from approximately 70 acres using primarily a seed tree prescription and shelterwood prescriptions where appropriate and enough live trees are present. Forest stands within the project area have been heavily affected by continued, consecutive years of western spruce budworm defoliation and many trees are failing to recover. Tree mortality is on the rise and the proposed project would capture the value of the timber resource before it further diminishes. The proposed harvest would contribute to the DNRC's sustained yield as mandated by state statute 77-5-222.

Existing roads if approved on private, BLM and State land will be used to access sale units and maintained to Best Management Practices standards (BMPs). Possibility of two new temporary roads to access the harvest units, one 0.2-mile-long and one 0.5-mile-long road on State land and would be reclaimed upon completion of harvest activities. No new permanent roads would be constructed with this project. No changes to road status or restrictions are proposed.

Approximately 230 acres of conifer encroachment removal would also be part of the project. The encroachment cutting would remove the conifers from the sage-steep ecosystem for more suitable Sage Grouse habitat. The removal of the conifers could take up to five years to complete. After all activities are complete the disturbances from the project would be reclaimed, grass seeded and sprayed for weeds for a minimum of three years after completion.

State lands included in this proposal are covered by a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The project would be designed to comply with HCP requirements.

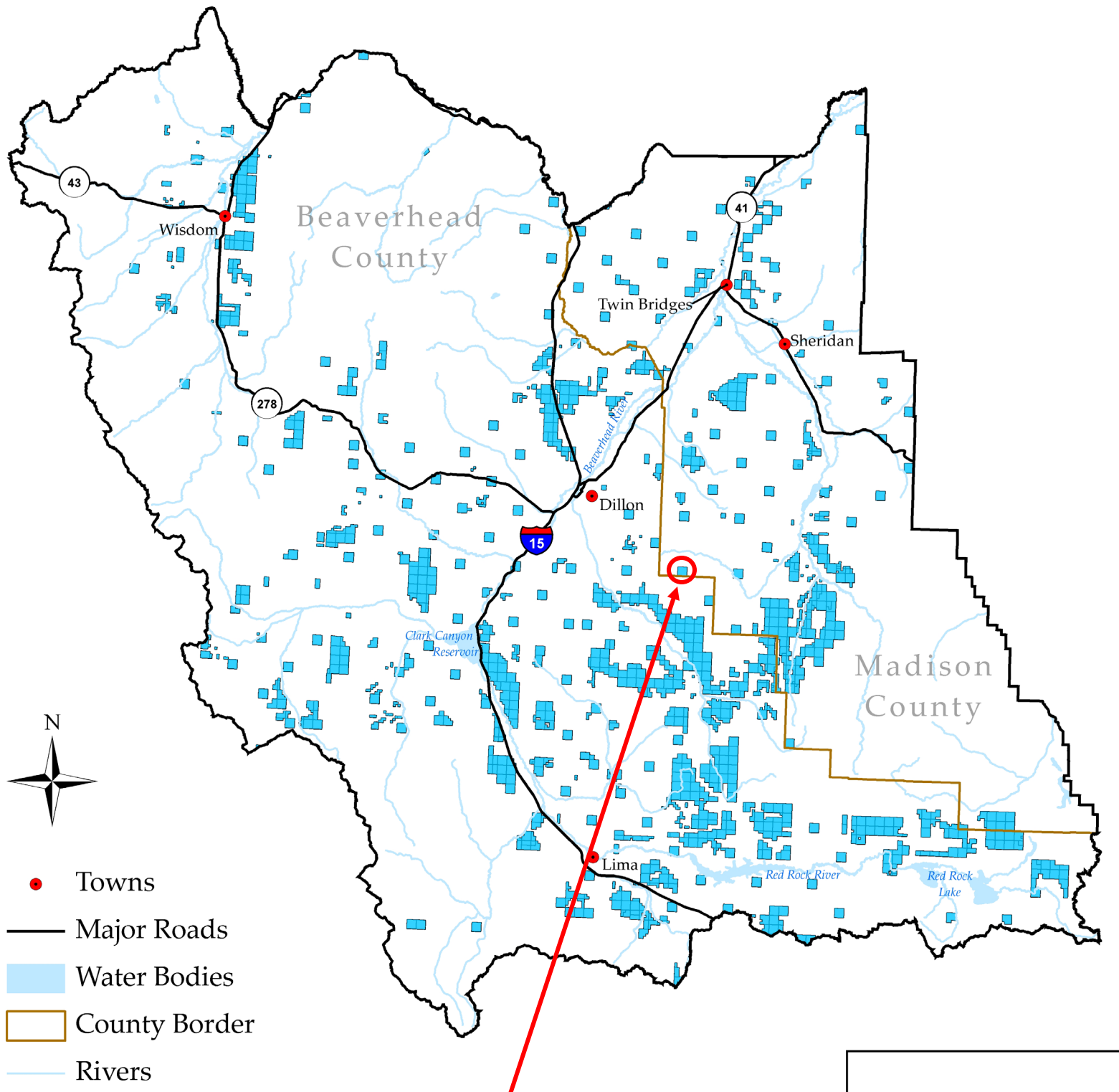
Protective measures to fulfill the endangered species act and protect other environmental and cultural considerations would be assessed and applied. Project related activities could take up to two years to complete (into 2023).

The DNRC is in the scoping phase of the project environmental assessment so all volumes, acreages and road distances are preliminary estimates. In preparation for this project, specialists such as wildlife biologists, hydrologists, soil scientists, and archeologists will be consulted.

The Montana DNRC invites written comments and suggestions concerning this proposal. Please respond by **April 5, 2021** to:

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Attn: **Jackson Spooner**
Dillon Unit
840 N. Montana St
Jackson.spooner@mt.gov
(406) 683-6305

Sweet and Sour Timber Permit VICINITY MAP DILLON UNIT



Timber Permit Location:
Section 36, Township 8 south, Range 7 west

