INTRODUCTION
Swan River State Forest (SRSF), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), is proposing the Squeezer Meadow Multiple Timber Sale Project. This project consists of multiple timber sales that would be sold and harvested over several years. This notice is to inform the public about this proposed project and provide an opportunity to become involved at the initial stage of project development.

GENERAL INFORMATION
The gross sale area is located in Lake County approximately 9 air miles southeast of Swan Lake, MT in the SRSF. It covers approximately 22,738 acres of state trust lands in and adjacent to Cilly Creek, Soup Creek, Napa Creek, Goat Creek and Squeezer Creek. Harvesting could occur on approximately 10 to 30 percent of the gross sale area.

- In Township 24 North, Range 17 West it includes Sections: 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34
- In Township 24 North, Range 18 West it includes Sections: 24, 25, 36
- In Township 23 North, Range 17 West it includes Sections: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36
- In Township 23 North, Range 18 West it includes Sections: 1, 12

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
The primary objectives of this project are to:

- promote biodiversity by moving forest stands toward historic cover type conditions and species composition
- improve forest health and productivity by addressing insect and disease issues
- generate revenue for the Common Schools trust to fund public education and to benefit local economies
- contribute sufficient volume towards DNRC’s annual sustained yield target of 60 million board feet (MMbf) as required by state law (77-5-221 through 223, Montana Codes Annotated (MCA)), while incorporating and meeting important ecological commitments
- develop and improve the transportation system and infrastructure for long-term management, fire suppression, and public access
• improve water quality by removing and rehabilitating sediment point sources and meeting Best Management Practices (BMPs) on all project roads, including haul routes to Highway 83

GUIDING POLICIES FOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

In December 2011, the Land Board approved the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Montana DNRC Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Approval of the ROD was followed by the issuance of an Incidental Take Permit by the United States Fish Wildlife Service (USFWS).

SRSF plans timber sale projects in accordance with the HCP, which allows for commercial forest management activities, including salvage, in an open geographic subzone for up to 3 years at a time on a rotating basis. Following the management of an opened subzone, the subzone will be closed for a mandatory rest period of at least 6 years. The Squeezer Meadow project area is located within subzones 2 and 3 (total of 5 subzones), as depicted in Appendix C, Figure C-7, of the HCP. Depending on harvest schedules, these subzones will likely be opened independently of each other, but forest management activities for both subzones are planned to be implemented between the years 2025-2028.

Lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of Common Schools. The State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) and DNRC are required by law to administer these lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long term for these beneficiary institutions, as required in Section 77-1-202, Montana Codes Annotated (MCA).

DNRC will manage the lands involved in this project according to the philosophy and standards described in the State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP), which states:

“Our premise is that the best way to produce long-term income for the trust is to manage intensively for healthy and biologically diverse forests. Our understanding is that a diverse forest is a dynamic forest that will produce the most reliable and highest long-term revenue stream... In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be DNRC’s primary source of revenue and primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives.”

The project design will follow Montana’s Administrative Rules for Forest Management (Annotated Rules of Montana 36.11.401 through 36.11.450).

In December of 2012, DNRC completed the acquisition of additional land throughout the proposed project area. As of Summer 2018, all acquired lands on the SRSF have been incorporated into the HCP. Management of this land is additionally affected by conservation easements held by the Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks under the Swan Valley Conservation Project Multi-Resource Management Plan.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

SRSF is in the initial stages of developing this project and is seeking public comment regarding concerns or issues for this proposed timber harvest. In accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), public input regarding the project will be used to identify
specific issues, define analyses, guide alternative development, and shape development of individual timber sales within the project area.

The DNRC has assembled an Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) of specialists (wildlife biologists, hydrologists, foresters, etc.) to evaluate public input and to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the potential environmental effects of this proposal. If requested, public meetings and/or field tours may be held as the project progresses.

**HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS**

The comment period will remain open until May 13th, 2022. You may submit comments to Chad Blanchard, Forester Management Supervisor, Swan River State Forest, via mail (34925 MT Highway 83, Swan Lake, MT, 59911), phone (406-754-2301), or e-mail at chad.blanchard@mt.gov.

We would also like to know the best way to keep you, or your organization informed and actively involved throughout the project development and analysis period. Please inform us if a particular type of communication is preferable.

If you do not wish to comment at this time but would like to remain informed of the status of this project, please fill out and return the enclosed form. If you do not respond, further documentation regarding the proposed Squeezer Meadow Multiple Timber Sale Project Proposal will not be sent to you.

Thank you for your interest in the management of state trust lands.

I do not have concerns or comments at this time but would like to stay involved in the process of project development.

Name: _____________________________________________

Address:_____________________________________________________

Telephone:____________________________________________________

eMail:_____________________________________________________

Please send completed form to arrive by May 13th, 2022.

Swan River State Forest
c/o Chad Blanchard
34925 MT Highway 83
Swan Lake, MT 59911
Telephone: 406-754-2301
or e-mail: chad.blanchard@mt.gov
Project Name: Squeezer Meadow EIS
Project Location: Subzone 2 and 3
County: Lake

State Trust Land Vicinity Map
Swan Unit
Squeezer Meadow EIS VICINITY MAP

Flathead County

State Trust Land
Major Roads
Water Bodies
County Lines
Rivers
Towns