

*Stillwater State Forest*  
**Proposed Barnaby Lake Fuels Reduction and  
Timber Permit Project**



November 25, 2014

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Stillwater Unit, is proposing the Barnaby Lake Fuels Reduction and Timber Permit Project. The DNRC proposal is in the initial stages of public involvement and project development for an environmental analysis. The proposed project would harvest an estimated 250 thousand board feet (Mbf) of sawtimber and would generate revenue for the Montana Common Schools trust.

The purpose of this notice is to inform the public that this area is being assessed for timber harvest activities beginning in 2015. In addition, this document provides general information about the proposal and its objectives. This notice initiates a 10-day comment period, providing the public with an opportunity to become involved at the initial stage of the project. Comments and concerns regarding proposed timber harvesting in the listed areas—and the associated activities, such as roadwork and site preparation—are welcome and will be considered in the design of the project. The public comment period will remain open until December 8, 2014.

## **PROJECT PARAMETERS**

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the Common Schools trust. The State Board of Land Commissioners 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, 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.”*

Furthermore, the project design will follow *Montana’s Administrative Rules for Forest Management (Annotated Rules of Montana 36.11.401 through 36.11.456)*.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND INITIAL MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

A multi-storied stand has developed since the harvest performed in the mid-1980s. A high density of sapling-sized Douglas-fir has become established and has created a continuous amount of fuel and ladder fuels which could be a hazard if a wildfire were to occur in the area.

DNRC has been considering how to deal with these issues for several years, but has not found a means to supplement the cost of the thinning and removing these small trees as part of a standard harvest project. DNRC nominated several areas on this section for the Forests In Focus Grant, which is a part of the 2014 Farm Bill.

### **Proposed Units 1 and 2**

- These units have been approved for fuels reduction under the 2014 Farm Bill that is implemented through the Montana Forests in Focus Program.
- In Unit 1 (65 acres):
  - Approximately 25 to 30% of the standing saw timber would be harvested utilizing individual tree selection. Larger diameter western larch, Douglas-fir, and ponderosa pine with good crowns and growth would be priority for retention.
  - The sapling-sized trees would remain at a density to keep the stand fully stocked after treatment. The goal is to have a 10-foot spacing between the tree crowns.
  - The excess saplings would be thinned by chipping or masticating, thereby reducing the excess forest fuels to chips versus piles of logging slash.
  - The logging slash that cannot be chipped would be mostly piled at the log landing and burned.
- In Unit 2 (5 acres):
  - The stand is 25-year-old lodgepole pine. These two small areas would be chipped or masticated on site, leaving trees at a 16-20' spacing to create a 10-foot spacing of the crowns.

### **Proposed Unit 3 (90 acres)**

- The treatments on this area would include commercial thinning, shelterwood, and group-selection harvesting. The type of treatment depends upon the existing species mix, tree vigor, tree quality, and site-specific factors (aspect, soils, etc.).
- The general idea behind utilizing 3 types of treatments is to create a mosaic of forest types and age classes on the State ownership.
- The group-selection will create small openings 1 to 3 acres in size.
- Regenerating the areas receiving the group-selection and shelterwood will be a priority.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

- Establish regeneration of the desired species mix, improve vigor/tree growth, and meet the Forest Management Rules in relation to wildlife, fisheries, and water quality.
- Increase future timber productivity in the harvest units.
- Contribute to the DNRC and Northwestern Land Office's annual targets of timber-harvest volumes. DNRC is required by state law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) to annually harvest approximately 57.6 MMbf statewide.
- Apply Best Management Practices (BMPs) or meet design criteria that are necessary to promote long-term water quality during logging and road improvement operations. BMPs include site improvements such as improvements to drainage from ditches and road surfaces, and road maintenance on segments of roads prior to log hauling.

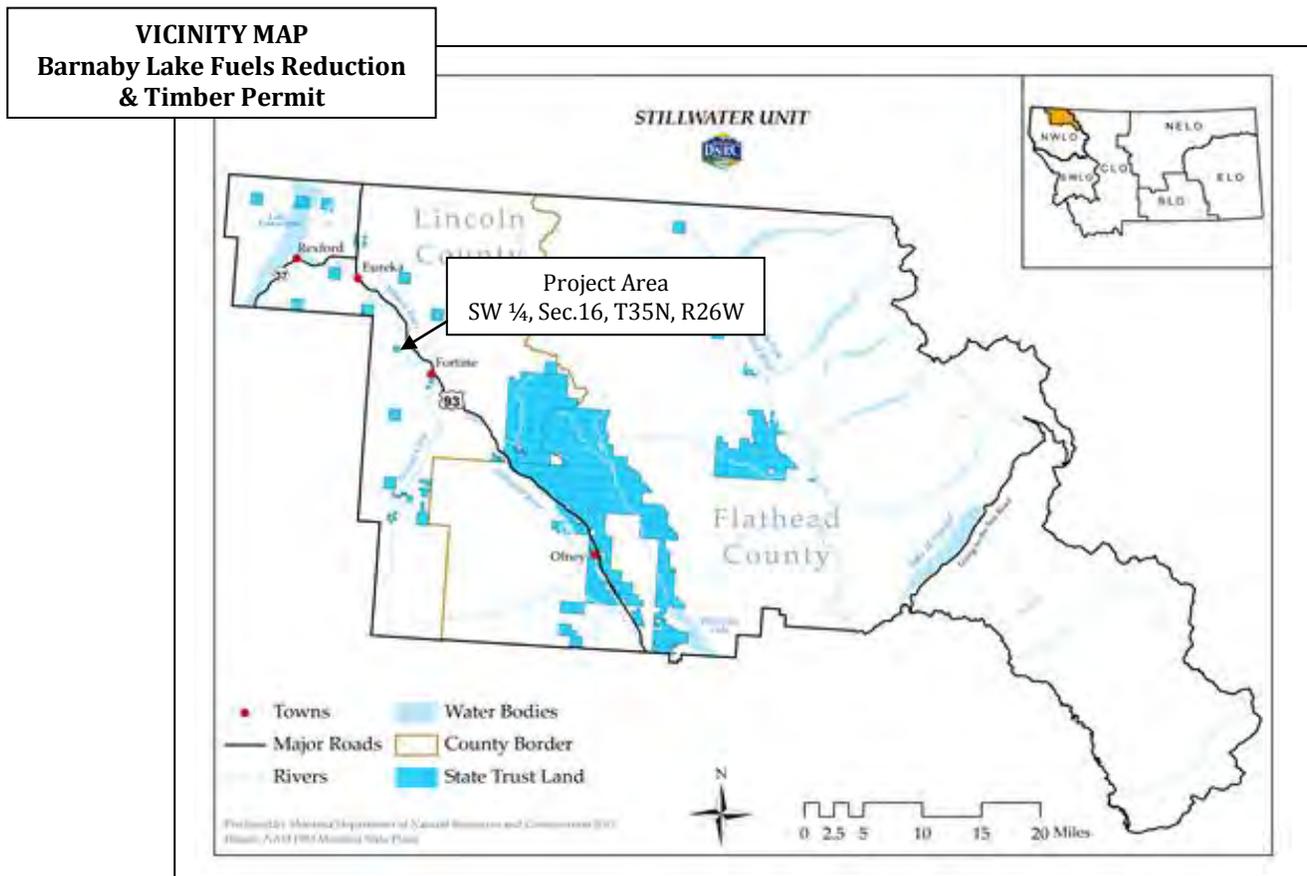
## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT AREA

1. The project area is located approximately 3.5 miles north of Fortine, MT. Access to the project area includes Highway 93, Dahlberg Siding Road, Barnaby Lake Road (USFS 3655), USFS Road 3683, and various spur roads.
2. The State continues to complete:
  - reconnaissance surveys,
  - timber-stand inventories,
  - noxious-weed surveys, and
  - the assessment of transportation/logging systems.
3. The following *Project Area Map* displays the proposed project area. During project development, the proposed treatment units will be further defined as public input is considered and field reconnaissance is completed by the Interdisciplinary Team, which is comprised of a wildlife biologist, hydrologist and foresters.

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS

Please submit your comments by December 8, 2014 to: Montana DNRC Stillwater Unit, c/o Pete Evans, P.O. Box 164, Olney, MT 59927; phone this information to 406-881-2675; or email to [pevans@mt.gov](mailto:pevans@mt.gov).

If you do not have comments or concerns at this time, but wish to stay involved in the project, please email or telephone Pete Evans by December 8, 2014 or you will be removed from the mailing list.



# PROJECT MAP

