

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

DILLON UNIT OFFICE



GREG GIANFORTE, GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

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DILLON, MONTANA 59725

November 5, 2024

Initial Proposal **Fire Adapted Virginia City Conifer Encroachment Treatment Project**

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Dillon Unit, has received Montana Forest Action Plan (MT FAP) funding to perform conifer encroachment removal on approximately 378 acres across three locations on State Trust Lands in the Virginia and Nevada City area of Madison County. Conifer removal is proposed to begin in the Spring/Summer of 2025 and could extend for up to 5 years. The State Trust Lands tracts are located in:

Section 36, T5S, R3W – Granite Creek
Section 16, T6S, R3W – Herman Gulch
Section 36, T6S, R3W – Three Mile Creek

The three state trust land tracts add to wildfire risk around the Virginia and Nevada City area due to conifer encroachment of rangelands and overstocked forest stands. Madison County's draft Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan (CWPP) designates this historic, economically vital area as a high wildfire-risk area. The project will aim to mitigate this risk through forest thinning and conifer removal which will reduce wildfire risk, protect historical structures and community infrastructure, restore resilient landscapes, and enhance public awareness and firefighter safety.

Treatment on the Granite Creek section would involve about 62.91 acres and aims to thin historical forest stands by mechanically cutting and piling Douglas-fir (DBH of 5-8 inches) and all Rocky Mountain Juniper, prioritizing the removal of standing dead, insect-infested, and deformed trees, with debris managed through piling and burning or mastication to achieve 30-60 feet crown spacing. Treatment on the Herman Gulch section would involve about 117.04 acres, focuses on conifer removal in sagebrush steppe habitat, employing cut and pile burn and mastication treatments on all Douglas-fir and Rocky Mountain Juniper, also prioritizing unhealthy trees, to restore sagebrush steppe and reduce fuel loads near structures. Treatment on the Three Mile Creek section would involve about 198.05 acres for thinning, similar to Granite Creek, targeting Douglas-fir 5-8 DBH and all Rocky Mountain Juniper, with a focus on unhealthy trees and debris disposal by piling and burning to achieve similar crown spacing.

There is potential that prescribed broadcast burning will occur in the future on Herman Gulch and Three Mile Creek after the conifer removal treatments have occurred and if conditions are favorable. The use of prescribed fire would increase the longevity of the conifer removal treatment while encouraging multi-age sagebrush stands and reduced fuel loads.

The DNRC is in the scoping phase of the proposed project, so all acreages are preliminary estimates. DNRC invites comments and suggestions concerning this proposal on State Trust Lands from interested parties. For further information on this proposed project, you may contact the Montana Forest Action Plan Forester, Michaela Kalinowski at michaela.kalinowski@mt.gov. We will be accepting comments until December 05, 2024, at 5 pm. Please respond to:

Montana DNRC
Attn: Michaela Kalinowski
840 N. Montana Street
Dillon, MT 59725

Sincerely,

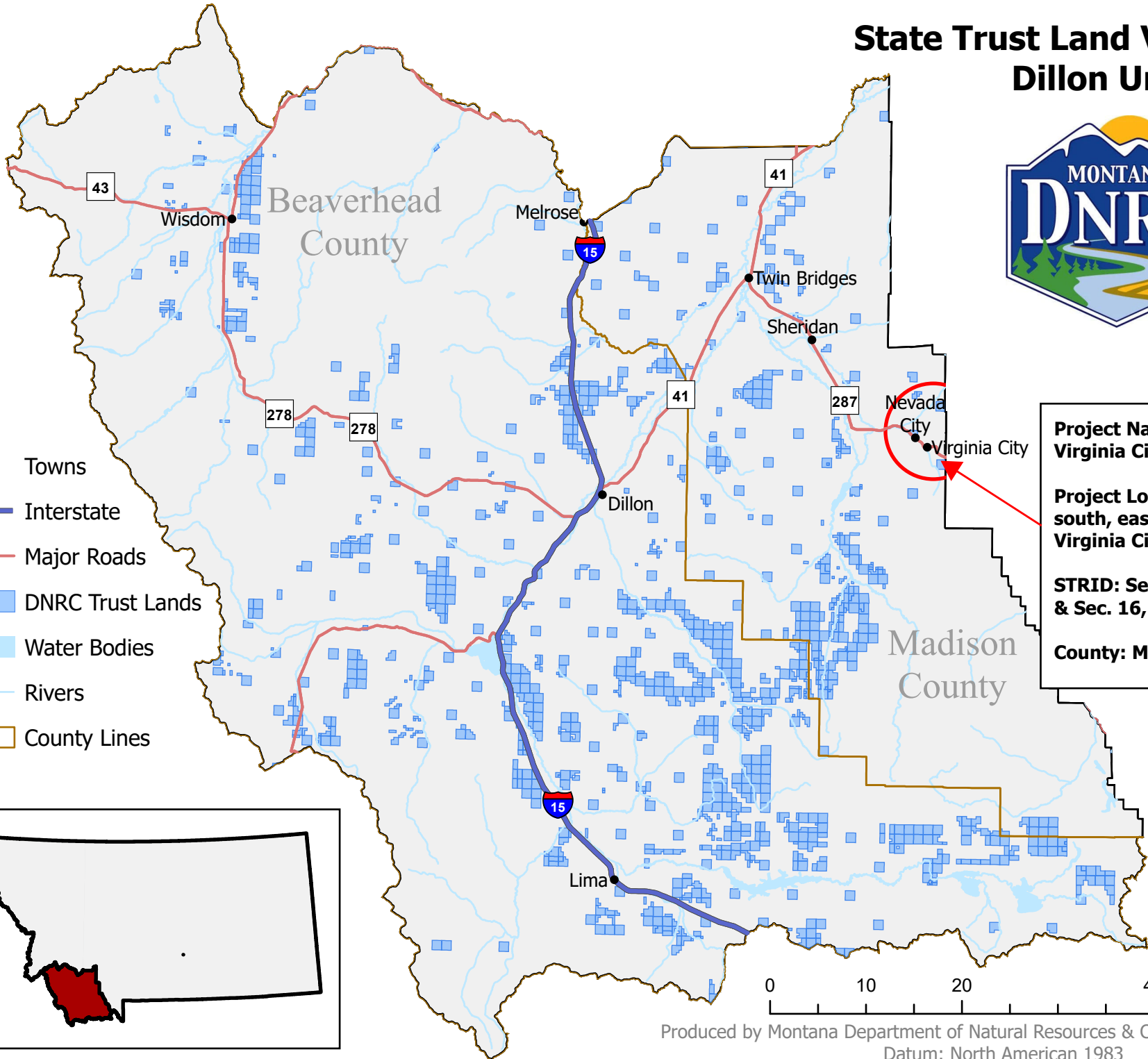
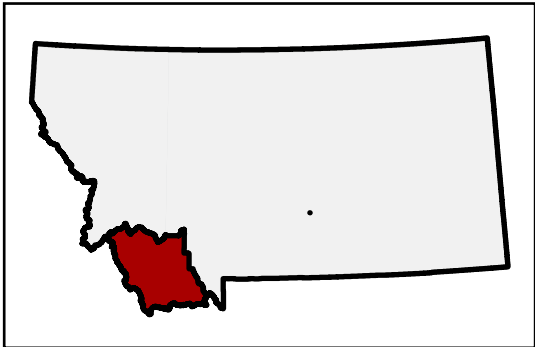
Michaela Kalinowski

Michaela Kalinowski
MT Forest Action Plan Forester
406-925-7076

State Trust Land Vicinity Map Dillon Unit



- Towns
- Interstate
- Major Roads
- DNRC Trust Lands
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- County Lines



Project Name: Fire Adapted Virginia City

Project Location: 1.5 miles south, east, & north of Virginia City, MT

STRID: Sec. 36, T5S, R3W & Sec. 16, 36, T6S, R3W

County: Madison

0 10 20 40 Miles

