



Initial Proposal
Foothills North Block Forest Management Project
06/03/2025

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Kalispell Unit is proposing a restoration project and timber harvest on the following state-owned parcels:

Sections 2, 3, 10, 11, Township 27N, Range 19W
Sections 27, 34, Township 28N Range 19W

The Foothills North Block Forest Management Project is located approximately 8 miles northeast of Bigfork, Montana in Flathead County.

The primary objectives of the proposed project are to:

- Promote a healthy, productive forest by removing decadent and diseased trees
- Salvage dead and dying trees
- Reduce existing fuel loads and increase fire resiliency
- Manage outbreaks of insects and disease in the stands
- Generate revenue for the following trusts: The School for Deaf and Blind, Capital/Public Buildings, and MSU 2nd Grant
- Restore Western white pine forest cover types, as appropriate, within the project area

The proposed project would treat approximately 800 acres with most of the material being non-merchantable, however an estimated 1.5 million board feet of merchantable timber would be harvested and contribute to the DNRC's sustained yield as mandated by state statute ([MCA 77-5-222](#)). Approximately 400 acres would be treated with restoration treatments to move decadent forest stands towards more fire resilient stand conditions using an individual tree selection prescription. The remaining 400 acres would fall under traditional commercial forest management activities and may include pre-commercial thinning, commercial thinning, shelterwood, and overstory removal harvest prescriptions.

Non-commercial portions of the project would utilize [House Bill 883](#) (HB 883) funding to implement restoration treatments. The intent of HB 883 is to increase the pace and scale of forest management actions that would improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk in Montana. HB 883 allows funds from the fire suppression account to be used for fuels reduction and mitigation activities.

Approximately 2 miles of new road construction is proposed to access the project area and would remain closed to motorized public use. Roads constructed to access harvest units south of the Jewel Basin road would be temporary and reclaimed after forest management activities are completed. Roads constructed north of the Jewel Basin Road would remain in DNRC's road system but would be closed to public motorized use. Existing road systems would be improved, as needed, to provide adequate surface drainage, meet [Best Management Practices](#), and ensure public and operational safety.

High standard slash clean-up, noxious weed management, site preparation, and pile burning activities would occur where needed once harvesting has been completed. If feasible, larger slash piles would be chipped and hauled to local mills instead of being burned on site.

During the scoping of a previous project in this area (Foothills Restoration Project in 2023), various concerns were brought to the DNRC's attention, such as noxious weeds, illegal motorized activity on restricted roads, retention of western hemlock and old growth stands and access to cross-country ski trails. To account for these previous concerns, the DNRC would implement the following

mitigations on the currently proposed project:

- Noxious weed management would include up to three treatments to help prevent and control noxious weeds. An initial pre-project weed treatment would occur on existing roads that access the project treatment units. During project operations, all harvest equipment must pass a weed inspection to ensure that it will not transport weeds from other sites. A second weed treatment would occur one to two years post-harvest following tree planting. A third and final weed treatment would occur the year following the second weed treatment and would be focused on spot spraying any problem areas along roads and landings.
- Unauthorized motorized use of restricted roads- road closure effectiveness would be evaluated and monitored to ensure that harvest activities do not create new opportunities for illegal motorized access.
- Western hemlock and old growth timber stands – according to the DNRC forest inventory database and onsite reconnaissance that has occurred to date, no western hemlock or old growth stands have been identified in the proposed treatment areas. If any stands that are majority western hemlock are encountered, they would be excluded from the harvest treatment. If an old growth stand is encountered, old growth mitigations to restore or maintain old growth would be applied.
- Cross-country ski trail access – DNRC recognizes the winter recreation that occurs in the project area and would mitigate conflicts with harvest activities when feasible and coordinate efforts with the Bigfork Community Nordic Center.

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 **07/03/2025** to:

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
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State Trust Land Vicinity Map

Kalispell Unit

Foothills North Block Forest Management Project

FLATHEAD COUNTY



Kalispell

Whitefish
Columbia Falls

Bigfork

Lakeside

Flathead Lake

Polson

Pablo

Ronan

Saint Ignatius

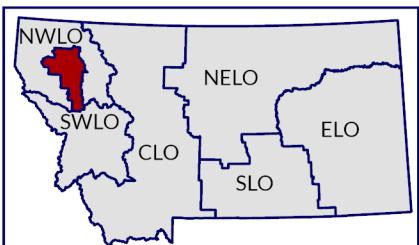
Arlee

Sections: 2,3,10,11
Township:27N
Range:19W

Sections: 27,34
Township:28N
Range:19W

County: Flathead

- Towns
- County Lines
- Major Roads
- Rivers & Lakes
- State Trust Land



0 5 10 20 Miles

Foothills North Block Forest Management Project

Public Scoping Map

