

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Dick Creek	Alternative Practice
Proposed	
Implementation Date:	February 2026 through April 2026
Proponent:	Hall Wood Processing on NG Katharine C Trust
Location:	S21 T15N R12W
County:	Powell

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Doug Hall of Hall Wood Processing is requesting an Alternative Practice (AP) to skid logs across an old primary channel adjacent to Dick Creek. This area has had past timber harvest and fuels mitigation work, and the AP would allow this work to continue.

Hall Wood Processing is requesting an AP to the Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) Law along Dick Creek (class 2 stream) Section of 21 T15N R12W. AP area is in one location (see map) AP is to protect an existing dry ford. The AP requested is to deposit slash into the stream channel (SMZ Rule 9 (36.11.309)).

According to MCA 77-5-301 through 307, DNRC is authorized to administer and enforce the provisions of the SMZ Law. This Law was developed to protect the public interest of water quality and quantity within forested areas; provide for standards, oversights and penalties to ensure forest practices conserve the integrity of SMZ's; provide guidelines for wildlife management within SMZ's; and allow operators necessary flexibility to use practices appropriate to site-specific conditions in the SMZ. ARM 36.11.301 through 313 further specify the design of SMZ boundaries, allowable activities and prohibitions within the SMZ, penalties and other related provisions.

According to MCA 77-5-304 and ARM 36.11.310, DNRC may approve alternative practices that are different from practices required by the SMZ law only if such practices would otherwise be lawful and continue to conserve or not significantly diminish the integrity and function of the SMZ. This AP would allow for the requests listed above. Additional stipulations of this request would include:

- Notify Service Forester at beginning and end of Alternative Practice Operations.
- Operations would be done during dry or frozen soil conditions or with enough snow cover to minimize soil disturbance.
- The lead end of logs will be suspended above the ground while skidding.
- Logs placed into the stream would be chained or cabled together so they can be removed without disturbance of the stream bed.
- Following operations logs and ANY other slash placed in the stream would be removed and placed so as to not reenter the stream channel.
- Any scarified areas within the SMZ would be grass seeded with a seed mixture of proponents choosing.
- Forestry BMPs would be applied during operations.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Clearwater service forester was consulted in February 2026 by proponent. This activity is on private property with planned timber harvest. Project Manager Doug Hall met on site with DNRC service forester on 02/02/2026. No public involvement is deemed necessary.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

DNRC Forestry Assistance has Jurisdiction over the SMZ law and any alternative practices, Powell County Conservation District has jurisdiction over the bed and banks of Dick Creek.

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

Scope of Analysis and Definition of Project Area: The following document describes conditions within the stretch of Dick creek that passes through the project area. The project area is defined as those portions of the SMZ on which the applicant has requested an Alternative Practice. Potential effects analyzed under the action and no action alternatives are limited to this project area.

Alternative A - No Action

Do not issue AP. This alternative would not allow slash to be deposited within the SMZ.

Alternative B- Action:

This alternative would allow for the timber salvage actions outlined under *Type and Purpose of Action* above.

Issue AP that allows slash to be deposited within the stream channel (SMZ rule 9) to protect the existing stream crossing structure.

At the site of the Alternative Practice an existing road fords the stream channel. In the interest of protecting the crossing and stream banks during skidding operations slash (whole logs) would be placed in the stream channel perpendicular to the stream to protect the stream bed and banks during log skidding utilizing the stream crossing.

The stream crossing where this AP would occur is an existing road that crosses the stream. Through conversations with the landowners and an adjacent landowner not involved with the project the stream is believed to have not flowed surface water in over 5 years.

The following mitigations would be part of the Alternative Practice:

- Notify Service Forester at beginning and end of Alternative Practice Operations.
- Operations would be done during dry or frozen soil conditions or with enough snow cover to minimize soil disturbance.
- The lead end of logs will be suspended above the ground and slash placed in the stream while skidding.

- Logs placed into the stream would be chained or cabled together so they can be removed without disturbance of the stream bed.
- Following operations logs and ANY other slash placed in the stream would be removed and placed so as to not reenter the stream channel.
- Any scarified areas within the SMZ would be grass seeded with a seed mixture of proponents choosing.
- Forestry BMPs would be applied during operations.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

Alternative A- No Action:

A query of the physical soil properties using NRCS Web Soil Survey showed that the project location is in perma gravelly loam soils. These soils have a moderate risk of erosion associated with road construction. Under this alternative the current road and stream ford would be used for timber skidding operations and moderate long term effects would be expected.

Alternative B- Action:

A query of the physical soil properties using NRCS Web Soil Survey showed that the project location is in perma gravelly loam soils. These soils have a moderate risk of erosion associated with road construction. Under this alternative logs would be placed in the stream channel to protect the existing road and dry ford. This would be expected to limit adverse effects to soils and the stream bed and banks. This action would also promote forestry Best Management Practices (BMP) regarding ford stream crossings. Any impacts would be expected to be minor and temporary.

Mitigation measures would include:

- Notify Service Forester at beginning and end of Alternative Practice Operations.
- Operations would be done during dry or frozen soil conditions or with enough snow cover to minimize soil disturbance.
- The lead end of logs will be suspended above the ground while skidding.
- Logs placed into the stream would be chained or cabled together so they can be removed without disturbance of the stream bed.
- Following operations logs and ANY other slash placed in the stream would be removed and placed so as to not reenter the stream channel.
- Any scarified areas within the SMZ would be grass seeded with a seed mixture of proponents choosing.
- Forestry BMPs would be applied during operations.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

Is it possible that implementing this alternative practice would impact the integrity of the SMZ and these specific functions?

- Ability to act as an effective sediment filter.
- Ability to provide shade to regulate stream temperature.
- Protection of stream channel and banks.
- Ability to provide large woody debris for eventual recruitment into the stream to maintain riffles, pools, and other elements of channel stability.

Existing Condition

The project area is located at an existing ford on Dick Creek on private ground in Powell County. No prior SMZ harvest has occurred. No SMZ harvest is expected beyond retention requirements of the SMZ law.

Potential Environmental Effects

Alternative A- No Action:

No slash would be allowed to be placed in the stream. Log skidding would likely still occur on the existing road and stream ford. With no slash placed to protect the stream bed and banks, damage to said bed and banks would be expected. Degree of disturbance and damage to the stream bed and banks would likely range from moderate to severe depending on the number of trips a skidder with logs takes across the ford.

Alternative B- Action:

Allow slash to be placed into the stream channel. Slash placed within the stream would be expected to act as a buffer between logs being skid across the ford and the stream bed and banks. This slash buffer would be expected to minimize or eliminate loose sediment creation and damage to the stream bed and banks. There likely would be some sediment delivery in the placement and removal of slash from the stream, this is expected to be less than the No Action alternative.

- The ability of the SMZ to act as an effective sediment filter would be maintained as the project goal is to protect/maintain the existing ford/road geometry.
- The ability of the SMZ to provide shade would be maintained as no SMZ harvest beyond SMZ law would occur.
- Stream channel and bank integrity would be protected by placing slash withing the fording location. The purpose of this AP is to protect this function of the SMZ.
- Large woody debris recruitment would be maintained through the harvest specifications set out in the SMZ law.
- The ability of the SMZ to promote floodplain stability would not be impacted.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

Slash created from the project would need to be disposed of in accordance with all applicable laws. Impacts are expected to be similar under either alternative and would be expected to be minor.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

Existing Condition

Project area consists of a single crossing location. Adjacent stands are made up of Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine. Timber harvest has occurred on some adjacent stands.

Potential Environmental Effects

Due to there being an existing road with an existing ford crossing timber harvest would be expected to occur under either alternative. Action alternative goal is to mitigate the impacts of said harvest. Vegetation communities, composition, and cover would not be expected to significantly differ under either alternative.

Alternative A- No Action:

Any harvest would follow the SMZ law.

Alternative B- Action:

An AP would be granted allowing placement of slash within the stream allowing stream bed and bank protection during harvest operations crossing the stream.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Terrestrial and Avian Life and Habitats:

The area is used by numerous terrestrial and avian species. On field visits no nests or dens of any animals were discovered. Through multiple landowner interviews and professional judgement the stream has not had flow for several years.

Alternative A- No Action:

Any harvest would follow the SMZ law. Slash would not be placed in the stream channel. Channel degradation in the spot of the existing ford would be expected to increase. If flow were to return to the stream it would be expected to mobilize more sediment than under the action alternative.

Alternative B- Action:

The action alternative would be expected to protect and maintain stream bed and banks terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats, would be expected to be maintained in their current state.

Aquatic life and habitats:

Currently no stream flow is observed or expected. Residual stand will continue to be able to contribute DWD and shade. Shade is being supported by existing vegetation. Under the Action alternative minor temporary impacts to aquatic life and habitat would be expected under the no action alternative moderate to severe impacts would be expected in the project location if stream flow resumes in the future.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Threatened or endangered species such as grizzly bears, and Canada lynx may use the area. The proposed actions would be low impact on overall behavior, populations, or habitat. Stream does not currently support fish of any species, however if flow resumes sediment delivery to downstream populations could have adverse effects.

The Action Alternative aims to limit sediment mobilization through the use of the current crossing structure.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No impacts to historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources would be expected, under either alternative.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Under the action alternative minimal temporary impacts to aesthetics would be expected. Project aligns with landowner goals.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No limited resources would be used for this project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

N/A.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Under the both alternatives, normal health risks associated with logging operations would be anticipated.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Both alternatives would add a minor amount of additional timber to the wood products industry.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

Both alternatives would add a small amount of additional work and income to the contractor.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Both alternatives would generate minor additional income tax revenue from the additional work.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Both alternatives would have no anticipated effects on the demand for local government services.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The project area is covered by the Powell County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and Montana Forest Action Plan. This project would not be contrary to these plans.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Project is located on private lands. Under either alternative, this activity would have no impact on access to or quality of recreational and wilderness activities for the public.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

Under either alternative, this activity would have no impact on density or distribution of population and housing.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Logging is an activity that would be considered a traditional lifestyle for this community and area, this activity would not disrupt social structures.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Under either alternative, cultural uniqueness and diversity would not be affected.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

There are no unique social or economic qualities on this site.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Kyle Carpenter Title: Service Forester	Date: 02/11/2026
--------------------------------------	---	-------------------------

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Following a review of the document as well as the corresponding Department policies and rules, the Action Alternative has been selected because it meets the intent of the project objectives outlined in Section I – Type and Purpose of Action. This includes is to deposit slash into the stream channel (SMZ Rule 9 (36.11.309)).

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I find that the Action Alternative will not have significant impacts for the following reasons:

- The Action Alternative is in compliance with the existing laws, rules, policies, and standards applicable to this type of proposed action.
- Appropriate mitigations have been proposed to minimize potential impacts to resources such as soil and water quality.

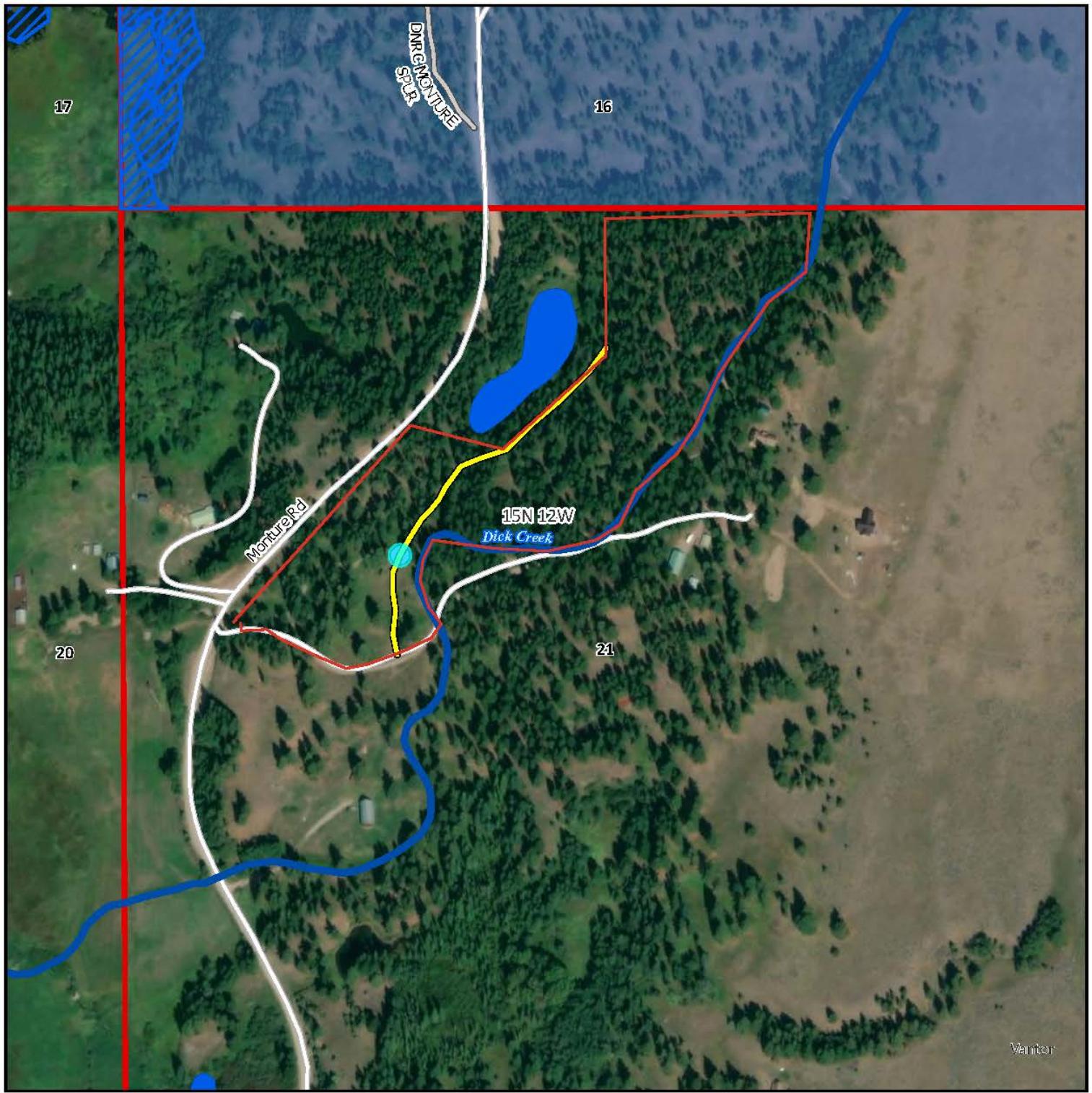
27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Kristen Baker-Dickinson Title: Clearwater Unit Manager
Signature: <i>K.Baker-Dickinson</i>	Date: 2/12/2026



- RANCH ROAD
- AP LOCATION
- Montana State Trust Lands

DICK CREEK ALTERNATIVE PRACTICE



0 125 250 500
Feet

