

## Environmental Assessment Checklist

**Project Name:** Zimmerman AP  
**Proposed Implementation Date:** 06/2024  
**Proponent:** Wayne Zimmerman/ Harley Borntrager, Plains Unit, NWLO  
**County:** Sanders  
**HRA #:** 45-B-49385  
**Expiration Date:** 09/2024

### Type and Purpose of Action

#### Description of Proposed Alternative Practice Action:

**Wayne Zimmerman** is proposing an Alternative Practice. The project is located 4 miles SW of Plains MT (refer to Attachment's vicinity map A-1 and project map A-2) and includes the following sections: **T19N R27W S7**.

Objectives of the project include:

- Wayne Zimmerman is requesting an Alternative Practice to skid with a line machine across a Class 3 Stream, use ground-based equipment to skid within 35 feet of two Class 2 Streams, and use an existing excavated skid trail that crosses within 35 feet of a Class 2 stream, in the Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) of the West Fork of Combest Creek and tributaries. Total linear extent along the streams is 750 feet. This Alternative Practice would allow the aforementioned activity to occur in the SMZ under the Montana Guide to the Streamside Zone Law and Rules 2006 (ARM 36.11.310).
- 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 be otherwise lawful and continue to conserve or not significantly diminish the integrity and function of the SMZ.

- Allowances of this request would include:
  1. *The travel of skidders through portions of the Streamside Management Zone, an exception to Rule 4 (36.111.304) Operation of Equipment in the Montana Guide to the Streamside Management Zone Law and Rule 2006 book.*
  2. *Would allow skidding to occur through the SMZ from the existing road, along the North side of the West Fork of Combest Creek on an existing excavated skid trail.*
  3. *Would also allow skyline yarding trees across a Class 3 Stream segment without being fully suspended.*

Mitigation measures associated with this AP would include:

1. *Ground conditions would be dry to less than 20% moisture content.*
2. *Placing an effective slash filter and rock armor below the excavated skid trail as per Montana's Forestry BMP's.*
3. *Grass seeding ALL disturbed areas within SMZ, completed within 1 week at the end of use.*
4. *Class 3 stream segment must be dry before any yarding occurs.*
5. *Any slash deposited in Class 3 Stream would be removed daily*
6. *Skyline corridors would be spaced a minimum of 75 feet apart.*

Proposed activities include:

Rule	Action	Quantity
	<b>Proposed Alternative Practices</b>	
1	Broadcast burning	
2	Operation of Equipment in SMZ	750 feet
3	Clearcutting	
4	Road construction	
5	Hazardous Materials	
6	Side Casting of Material	
7	Depositing Slash	

<b>Duration of Activities:</b>	3 months
<b>Implementation Period:</b>	06/2024-08/2024

The MT-DNRC's implementation of the Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) law and rules protects and maintains the functions of a SMZ. The six functions of an SMZ, as identified in the SMZ law (77-5-301[1] MCA), are:

- Acts as an effective sediment filter to maintain water quality.
- Provides shade to regulate stream temperature.
- Supports diverse and productive aquatic and terrestrial riparian habitats.
- Protects the stream channel and banks.
- Provide large woody debris that is eventually recruited into a stream to maintain riffles, pools, and other elements of channel structure.
- Promotes floodplain stability.

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## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

**No-Action Alternative:** No skid trails would be used in the SMZ of the Class 2 Streams. No cable yarding across Class 3 Stream would occur. Harvest would still occur in areas where no Alternative Practice is required.

**Action Alternative:** The action alternative would allow skidding with a line machine across a Class 3 Stream. Use of ground--based equipment to skid within 35 feet of two Class 2 Streams and use of an existing excavated skid trail within 35 feet of a Class 2 stream in the SMZ. All felling would be done by hand.

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## Impacts on the Physical Environment

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Evaluation of the impacts on the No-Action and Action Alternatives including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Physical Environment.

**VEGETATION:** Forest type is categorized as a Rocky Mountain Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest. Site is dominated by western red cedar and grand fir. Also present in the stand is lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir. Site is fully stocked.

**Insects and Diseases:** Fir Engraver is causing mortality in some of the grand fir. Indian paint fungus is also present. In addition, root rot is suspected to be located on the site.

*Vegetation Mitigations:* The action alternative requires dry conditions to protect vegetation in the SMZ. Timber harvest in the SMZ would not exceed retention requirements of the SMZ Law, and sub-merchantable trees and shrubs would be protected to the fullest extent possible.

## SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:

**Soil Disturbance and Productivity Existing Conditions:** The soil on this site is a gravelly sandy loam that is moderately well draining. This allows for water to travel intermittently above ground and then disappear below ground. The draw bottom has evidence of multiple abandoned channels that may have not seen any water since the mid-90's.

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative				
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	
<b>No-Action</b>													
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)	X				X					X			
Erosion	X				X					X			
Slope Stability	X				X				X				
<b>Action</b>													
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)		X				X				X			Y
Erosion		X				X				X			Y
Slope Stability		X				X				X			Y

*Soil Mitigations:* Soil conditions would be dry (less than 20% moisture content). Class 3 Stream would be dry before line skidding would be allowed. Slash filter windrow would be placed below the excavated skid trail to reduce erosion potential. Rock armor would be placed around culvert at road location.

**WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY:**

**Water Quality and Quantity Existing Conditions:** Proposed action would take place along Class 2 and 3 stream segments. It is estimated that only one Class 2 segment flows more than 3 months on a normal year, and it goes subsurface several times in the project area. The other stream segments likely flow less than 3 months a year. No evidence of spring 2024 flow was identified during a field review on June 6, 2024.

Water Quality & Quantity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative				
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	
<b>No-Action</b>													
Water Quality	X				X					X			
<b>Action</b>													
Water Quality		X				X				X			Y

*Water Quality & Quantity Mitigations:* Class 3 Stream must be dry before line skidding would be allowed. Slash filter windrow would be placed below the excavated skid trail to reduce the potential for sediment delivery to the Class 2 stream. Improvements on the road would include rock armoring at the inlet and outlet. Grass seeding all trails in SMZ would occur.

**FISHERIES:**

No fish can reach the stream segments in the project area due to the stream going underground in several locations.

**WILDLIFE:**

No impacts anticipated. Action Alternative 1 will likely have no impact on any threatened or endangered species.

**AIR QUALITY:**

Air Quality	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative				
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	
<b>No-Action</b>													
Smoke		X				X				X			Y
Dust		X				X				X			Y
<b>Action</b>													
Smoke		X				X				X			Y
Dust		X				X				X			Y

*Comments:* The action alternative would result in a minimal increase in slash burning. Dust levels may also increase minimally.

*Air Quality Mitigations:* No significant impacts are anticipated.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES / AESTHETICS / DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative				
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	
<b>No-Action</b>													
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X				
Aesthetics	X				X				X				
<b>Action</b>													
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X				
Aesthetics	X				X				X				

*Comments: No historic or Archeological sites identified. Aesthetics would not be affected; site is barely visible from public road.*

**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.*

None

## Impacts on the Human Population

Evaluation of the impacts on the proposed action including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Human Population.

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<b>No-Action</b>														
Health and Human Safety	X				X				X					
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	X				X				X					
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	X				X				X					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	X				X				X					
Demand for Government Services	X				X				X					
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	X				X				X					
Density and Distribution of population and housing	X				X				X					
Social Structures and Mores	X				X				X					
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	X				X				X					
<b>Action</b>														
Health and Human Safety	X				X				X					
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production		X				X				X				#1

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number	
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative						
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High			
Quantity and Distribution of Employment		X				X				X					#2
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues		X				X				X					#3
Demand for Government Services		X				X				X					#4
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	X				X				X						
Density and Distribution of population and housing	X				X				X						
Social Structures and Mores	X				X				X						
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	X				X				X						

*Comment #1:* Timber harvest would provide minimal continuing industrial production in the Western Montana area.

*#2:* People are currently employed in the wood products industry in this region. Due to the relatively small size of this project, there will be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on employment.

*#3* People are currently employed in the wood products industry in this region. Due to the relatively small size of this project, there will be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on employment.

*#4* Log trucks hauling to the mill would result in temporary increases in traffic on Combest Cr. Rd. and Highway 200. This increase is a normal contributor to the activities of the local community and industrial base and cannot be considered a new or increased source.

**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.*

None

## Finding

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### Alternative Selected

The Action 1 Alternative is selected for implementation.

### Significance of Potential Impacts

No Significant impacts were identified.

### Need for Further Environmental Analysis

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

### Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:

Name: David M. Olsen

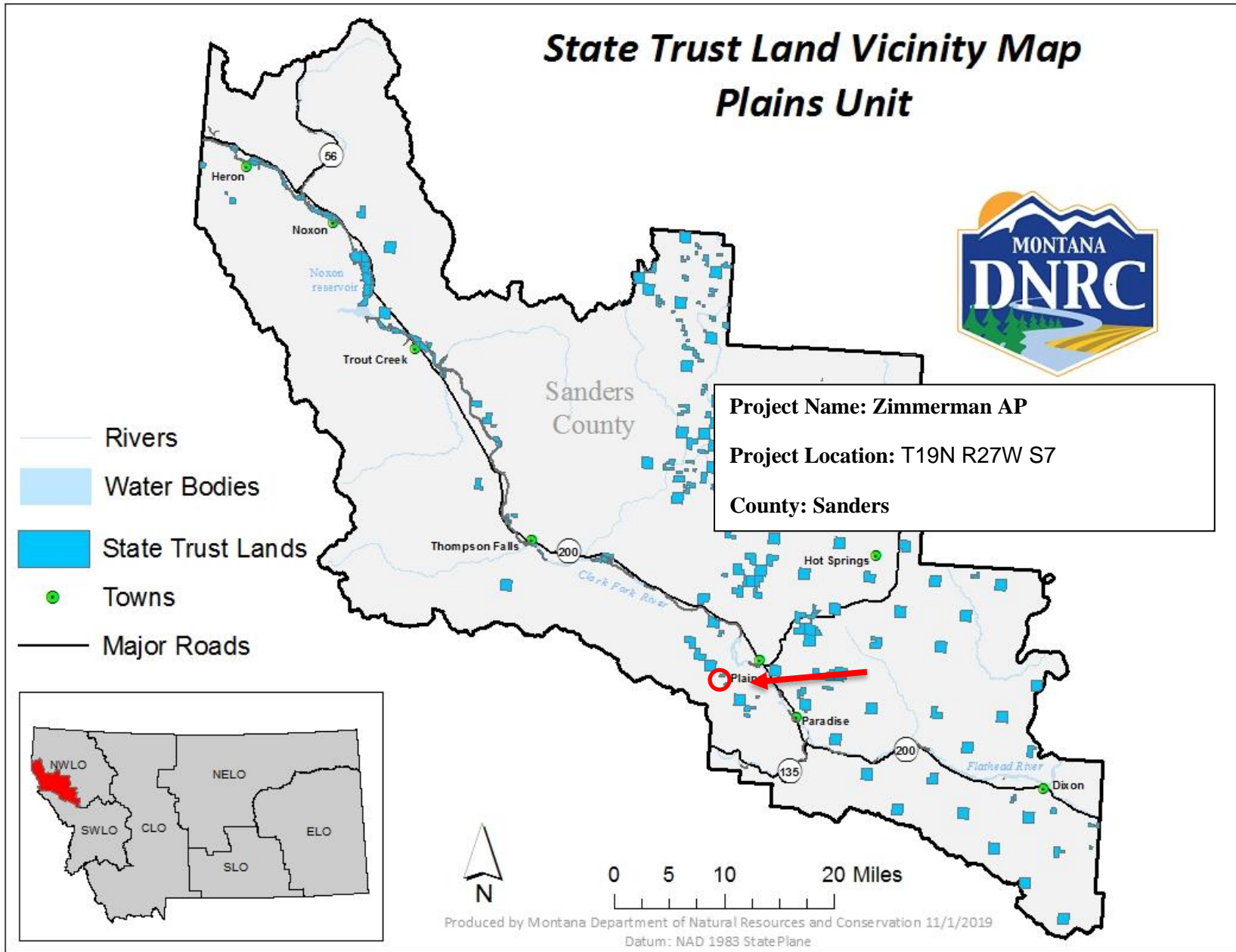
Title: Plains Unit Manager

Date: June 14, 2024

Signature: /s/ *David M. Olsen*

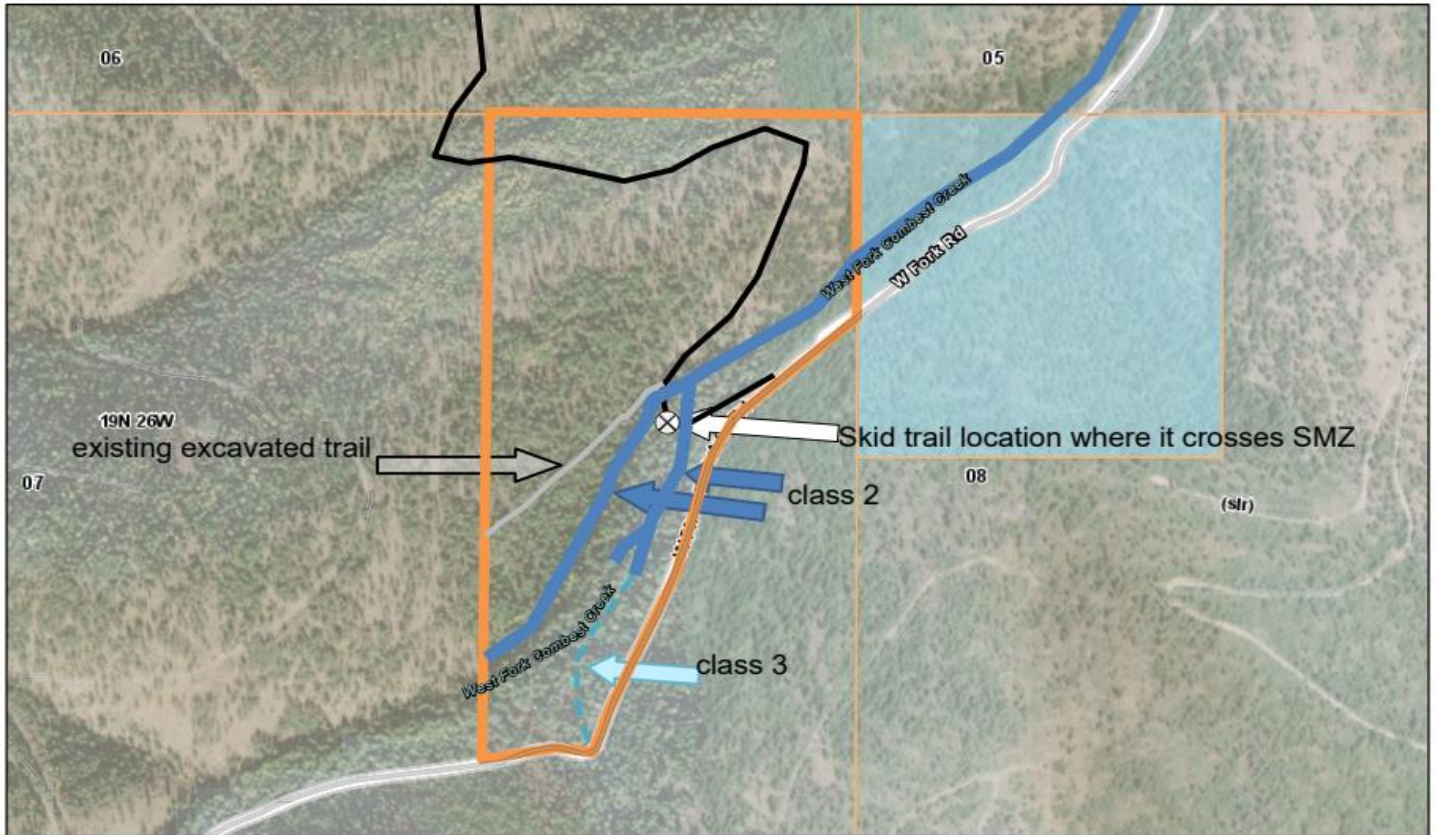


A-1: Timber Sale Vicinity Map



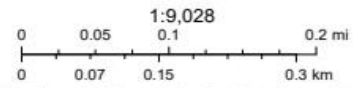
A-2: Alternative Practice Project Map

A-2 Zimmerman AP



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Parcel	National Park Service	Tribal	Major Rivers	USFS	RAMP	Section
Unserved/Unsurveyed Protracted	US Forest Service	Bureau of Indian Affairs Trust Land	Web_Stream_SMScale	Highway_cadastre	Primary Railroad Routes	Unsurveyed Protracted
Private Land Fill	US Dept of Agriculture	Unresolved Ownership	LakesAndRivers	NHS INTERSTATE	State Parks	PLSS Township
Public Lands	Defense Dept/Army Corp of Engineers	Tribal Lands	Cadastral Rivers	NHS NON-INTERSTATE	Non-Forest Service Wilderness Areas	County
Bureau of Land Management	State of Montana Misc.	Tribal Lands (other values)	Cadastral Lakes	PRIMARY	Forest Service Wilderness Areas	County Lines
Bureau of Reclamation	Montana State Trust Lands	Ownership	Roads_cadastre	SECONDARY	PLSS Fall Division	County Seat No Symbol
US Fish and Wildlife	Local Government	Conservation Easements	CITY-COUNTY	URBAN	Protracted Block	MT_Class



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Maxar | The data were made possible by a public/private partnership including the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, several state agencies, local governments, The Montana Power Company, Montana/Dakota Utilities, and Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad. Most