

Environmental Assessment Checklist

Project Name: Island Lake Timber Sale
Proposed Implementation Date: April 2026
Proponent: Libby Unit, Northwest Land Office, Montana DNRC
County: Lincoln

Type and Purpose of Action

Description of Proposed Action:

The Libby Unit of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is proposing the Island Lake Timber Sale. The project is located approximately 55 miles between Libby, MT and Kalispell, MT within the Island Creek drainage (refer to Attachments vicinity map A-1 and project map A-2) and includes the following sections:

Beneficiary	Legal Description	Total Acres	Treated Acres
Common Schools	Sec. 36, T29N R27W	640	430
Public Buildings			
MSU 2 nd Grant			
MSU Morrill			
Eastern College-MSU/Western College-U of M			
Montana Tech			
University of Montana			
School for the Deaf and Blind			
Pine Hills School			
Veterans Home			
Public Land Trust			
Acquired Land			

Objectives of the project include:

- Generate approximately **\$407,150** in revenue for the Common Schools Trust
- Sell approximately **2.5** million board feet of timber to generate revenue for the Common Schools Trust and to meet annual timber harvest levels mandated by State Law.
- Use silvicultural treatments to promote the development of historic stand conditions, emphasizing retention and/or regeneration of Ponderosa Pine and Western Larch, while improving stand health and vigor.
- Manage these lands in a way that would reduce fuels and the potential for wildfire to become a stand replacing fire, putting at risk adjacent land ownerships

and the timber asset that currently exists, and capture the value of that asset before tree mortality erodes additional value.

Proposed activities include:

Action	Quantity
Proposed Harvest Activities	# Acres
Clearcut	
Seed Tree	
Shelterwood	
Selection	
Old Growth Maintenance/Restoration	290
Commercial Thinning	140
Salvage	
Total Treatment Acres	430
Proposed Forest Improvement Treatment	# Acres
Pre-commercial Thinning	
Site preparation/scarification	
Planting	
Proposed Road Activities	# Miles
New permanent road construction	
New temporary road construction	
Road maintenance	4.5
Road reconstruction	
Road abandoned	
Road reclaimed	
Other Activities	

Duration of Activities:	4 years
Implementation Period:	April 2026- August 2030

The lands involved in this proposed project are held in trust by the State of Montana. (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and the DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA).

The DNRC would manage lands involved in this project in accordance with:

- The State Forest Land Management Plan (DNRC 1996),
- Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.401 through 471),
- The Montana DNRC Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) (DNRC 2010)
- and all other applicable state and federal laws.

Project Development

SCOPING:

- DATE: March 5th- April 7th, 2025
- PUBLIC SCOPED:
 - The scoping notice was posted on the DNRC Website:
<https://dnrc.mt.gov/News/scoping-notice>
 - Adjacent landowners
 - Statewide and Libby Unit scoping lists
- AGENCIES SCOPED:
 - Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
 - US Forest Service
 - All Montana Tribal Organizations
 - Lincoln County
- COMMENTS RECEIVED:
 - How many: One verbal comment from an industry professional was received.
 - Concern: The comment inquired about if the Island Lake timber sale and Johnson's Draw timber sale would be combined and sold together, as they were scoped together. He stated that if the sales were separate, the company would have an interest in the Johnson's Draw sale. If combined, hauling distance for Island Lake would likely discourage the interest in bidding.
 - Result: A final decision by the Forest Officers determined the sales would be sold as separate.

DNRC specialists were consulted, including Jessica Mannion (Management Forester), Dave Marsh (Forest Management Supervisor), Tim Spoelma (Silviculturist), Justin Cooper (Wildlife Biologist), Joshua Harris (Hydrologist/Soils/Fisheries), Patrick Rennie (Archeologist), and Emilia Grzesik (Forest Management Planner).

Internal and external issues and concerns were incorporated into project planning and design and will be implemented in associated contracts.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED: *(Conservation Easements, Army Corps of Engineers, road use permits, etc.)*

- **United States Fish & Wildlife Service-** DNRC is managing the habitats of threatened and endangered species on this project by implementing the Montana DNRC Forested Trust Lands HCP and the associated Incidental Take Permit that was issued by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) in February of 2012 under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. The HCP identifies specific conservation strategies for managing the habitats of grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and three fish species: bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and Columbia redband trout. This project complies with the HCP. The HCP can be found at <https://dnrc.mt.gov/TrustLand/about/planning-and-reports>.

- **Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**- DNRC is classified as a major open burner by DEQ and is issued a permit from DEQ to conduct burning activities on state lands managed by DNRC. As a major open-burning permit holder, DNRC agrees to comply with the limitations and conditions of the permit.
- **Montana/Idaho Airshed Group**- The DNRC is a member of the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group which was formed to minimize or prevent smoke impacts while using fire to accomplish land management objectives and/or fuel hazard reduction (Montana/Idaho Airshed Group 2010). As a member, DNRC must submit a list of planned burns to the Airshed Group's Smoke Monitoring Unit describing the type of burn to be conducted, the size of the burn in acres, the estimated fuel loading in tons/acre, and the location and elevation of each burn site. The Smoke Monitoring Unit provides timely restriction messages by airshed. DNRC is required to abide by those restrictions and burn only when granted approval by the Smoke Monitoring Unit when forecasted conditions are conducive to good smoke dispersion.
- **Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (DFWP)**- A Stream Protection Act Permit (124 Permit) is required from DFWP for activities that may affect the natural shape and form of a stream's channel, banks, or tributaries. Such activities include:
 - CMP Replacement installation within the Class 3 SMZ
 - Stream Crossing area within SMZ channel with weather restrictions

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No-Action Alternative: Under this alternative, no timber would be harvested and therefore no revenue would be generated from the project area for the Common Schools Trust at this time. No road maintenance would occur at this time as well. Salvage logging, firewood gathering, recreational use, fire suppression, and noxious-weed control may still occur. Natural events, such as forest succession, tree mortality due to insects and diseases, windthrow, down fuel accumulation, in-growth of ladder fuels, and wildfires, would continue to occur. The threat of high intensity wildfire spread to adjacent land ownerships would not be reduced.

Action Alternative : The Action Alternative would conduct a timber sale harvesting approximately 2.5 million board feet of timber, generating revenue for the Common Schools Trust. The proposed timber would utilize an old growth restoration prescription on 290 acres. A commercial thin prescription would be utilized for 140 acres. These prescriptions would assist in decreasing potential spread of insects and disease, harvesting the value of impacted trees, and opening stands to allow for the larger, dominant trees/ old growth to persist. In addition to the proposed harvest, there would be approximately 4.5 miles of existing road maintenance. Following timber harvest, a healthy, dominant overstory of approximately 60 BA in the Old growth unit, and approximately 70 seed trees per acre with 25 foot spacing for the commercial thin units. The units would be comprised primarily of ponderosa pine (PP), western larch (WL), and Douglas-fir (DF). Natural regeneration of PP, WL and DF would be promoted. Wildland fuel loading would be reduced.

Impacts on the Physical Environment

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

VEGETATION:

Vegetation Existing Conditions:

Harvest Unit	Habitat Group	Fire Regime	Current Cover Type	Age Class (years)	DFC	RX	Acres
1	Moderately warm and dry (westside)	Mixed	Ponderosa Pine	100-149	Ponderosa Pine	Commercial Thinning	93
2	Moderately warm and dry (westside)	Mixed	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	Old Growth	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	Old Growth Restoration	290
3	Moderately warm and dry (westside)	Mixed	Mixed Conifer	40-99	Ponderosa Pine	Commercial Thinning	47

Fire Hazard/Fuels: Shaded fuel breaks were cut along the main roads of the parcel in fall 2024 and hand piles of fuels were burned in fall 2025. The parcel is not within the WUI, however, there are neighboring private and industry properties adjacent to this parcel. Current fuel continuity would allow fire to burn throughout the parcel in the case of wildfire.

Insects and Diseases: There are patches of Douglas-fir beetle kill within the harvest units. Though this is at a low severity, mitigation would include harvest of these patches to avoid further detriment of currently healthy leave trees.

Sensitive/Rare Plants: There are no current records of sensitive, endangered, threatened, or rare plant species located in the proposed sale parcel. (MNHP).

Noxious Weeds: There is current and on-going management of noxious weed management for tansy ragwort, spotted knapweed, St. John's wort, and ox-eye daisy, which would continue post-harvest. This consists of road spraying of all weeds, along with spot spraying tansy ragwort as an effort of the Tansy Ragwort Task Force.

Vegetation	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Current Cover/DFCs		X				X				X			Y	V-1
Age Class	X				X				X					
Old Growth		X			X				X				Y	V-2
Fire/Fuels		X			X				X				Y	V-3
Insects/Disease		X				X				X			Y	V-4
Rare Plants	X				X				X					
Noxious Weeds	X				X				X				Y	V-5
Action														
Current Cover/DFCs		X				X				X			Y	V-1
Age Class	X				X				X					
Old Growth		X				X				X			Y	V-2
Fire/Fuels		X			X				X				Y	V-3
Insects/Disease		X				X				X			Y	V-4
Rare Plants	X				X				X					
Noxious Weeds		X				X				X			Y	V-5

Comments:

Old growth restoration: The prescription would protect much of the desirable, existing, advanced regeneration and provide daylight conditions for desirable tree species to become established. Overstory leave tree selection would favor retention of healthy, vigorous, dominant trees, most often, the tallest and/or largest-diameter class available. Following timber harvest, a healthy, dominant overstory of approximately 8-10 TPA of Old growth trees larger than 21 DBH per acre would be left on average, comprised primarily of Ponderosa Pine, Western Larch, and Douglas Fir. Leave trees will have an average of 60 BA or 45ft spacing where old growth trees are not present. Harvest would allow for management of defect issues and preferred cutting of lodgepole pine. The target stand would be a Western Larch/Douglas Fir desired cover type. Natural regeneration of PP, WL and DF would be promoted. Monitoring post-harvest would indicate any future planting necessary to promote desired species and stocking levels. Wildland fuel loading would be reduced. Old growth will be retained in all of the unit.

Commercial thin treatment: Following timber harvest, a healthy, dominant overstory of approximately 70 seed trees per acre would be left on average, comprised primarily of Ponderosa Pine, Western Larch, and Douglas Fir. Leave tree spacing would average 25 feet. Harvest would allow for management of defect issues, and preferred cutting of lodgepole pine, which may open pockets in areas. The target stand would be a Ponderosa Pine desired cover type. Wildland fuel loading would be reduced. Monitoring post-harvest would indicate any future thinning required.

Vegetation Mitigations:

V-1: No action would have low impacts on current cover/ desired future condition (DFC) as shade tolerant species would continue to grow and move the stand away from the DFC of ponderosa pine. The action alternative would encourage cover types to move towards DFC through proposed harvest and reforestation activities.

V-2: No action would have low impact on current old growth, as non-dominant trees continue to compete for and utilize limited resources in the stand. This could negatively impact the currently healthy old growth, which could eventually cause the stand to fall out of old growth criteria. The action alternative would harvest the non-dominant trees while leaving the old growth, which would promote health and vigor of the stand and redistribute resources to the old growth.

V-3: No action would have a low direct impact as the mortality continues to increase each year due to forest health concerns. This aids in the accumulation of fuels, adding to fire and fuel hazard. The action alternative would have low impact as it would decrease viable fuel continuity throughout the stand.

V-4: No action would have low direct impacts on insects and disease as mortality would continue to increase each year due to the spread of these concerns. The action alternative would significantly reduce insect and disease threats through proposed harvest, hazard reduction, and regeneration.

V-5: Noxious weeds would be managed through contract mitigations and through ongoing, cooperative efforts. To prevent the spread of noxious weeds from roads to "off-road", logging equipment would be inspected and required to be free of weed parts prior to mobilizing to the site. Monitoring post-harvest would indicate any future weed-spraying/ herbicide use necessary in stands and landings.

SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:

Soil Disturbance and Productivity Existing Conditions:

The area is located on the Upper Prichard and Appekunny formations. The primary rock types are argillite and argillaceous quartzite, all containing fine- to coarse-grained disseminated biotite, sericite, and pyrite. Generally, forest soils are highly productive, deep, and well-drained throughout the area. Soils derived from volcanic ash-influenced lacustrine sediments and their association with fine-textured lake deposits suggest the presence of moderately well-drained areas, especially in lower-lying or depressional spots. Because of the volcanic ash cap, the surface soil has high infiltration rates and without mitigation is highly susceptible to compaction, displacement, and erosion when vegetative cover is removed.

Forest management activities have been ongoing since the 1950's. Skid trail corridors have ameliorated but are still visible on the landscape. The proposed management includes three harvest units totaling approximately 430.33 acres that will be harvested for 2.3 mmbf considered to be moderate harvest intensity. The project will include 4.5 miles of existing road maintenance. Mechanical site preparation will be achieved through dispersed skidding throughout each unit.

No-Action Alternative: No direct or indirect impacts would occur to soils resources beyond those described in Soils Existing Conditions. Cumulative effects (other related past and present factors; other future, related actions; and any impacts described in Soils Existing Conditions would continue to occur.

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)	X				X				X				N/A	
Erosion	X				X				X				N/A	
Nutrient Cycling	X				X				X				N/A	
Slope Stability	X				X				X				N/A	
Soil Productivity	X				X				X				N/A	
Action														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)		X				X				X			Yes	S-1
Erosion		X				X				X			Yes	S-2
Nutrient Cycling		X				X				X			Yes	S-3
Slope Stability	X				X				X					
Soil Productivity		X				X				X			Yes	S-3

Comments:

- S-1: Monitoring of previous DNRC timber harvests has shown that for similar soils, the total detrimental impacts in a harvest area average 12.4% for traditional ground-based operations localized to primary skid trails and log landing sites (DNRC 2011). Detrimental soil impacts are considered substantive when they exceed 20 percent of a harvest area (DNRC 1996).
- S-2: Standard implementation of forest Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control erosion concurrent with harvest activities would mitigate any erosion concerns in the project area. Primary or highly impacted skid trails would be covered with slash and debris.
- S-3: Coarse and fine woody debris provide a crucial component in forested environments through nutrient cycling, microbial habitat, moisture retention and protection from mineral soil erosion (Harmon et al., 1986). As required in the DNRC Timber Sale Contract, both fine and coarse woody debris would be retained to reduce potential impacts to forest productivity. Although fine woody debris would be left on site for nutrient retention, a reduction in annual fine material contribution would result from this alternative. Maintaining coarse woody debris, adhering to soil moisture restrictions and following

skid trail/corridor spacing recommendations would reduce the risk of cumulative adverse soil productivity impacts.

Soil Mitigations:

1. Limit equipment operations to periods when soils are relatively dry (less than 20 percent), frozen, or snow-covered to minimize soil compaction and rutting and maintain drain-age features. Check soil moisture conditions prior to equipment start-up.
2. The logger and sales administrator will agree to a skidding plan prior to equipment operations. Skid-trail planning will identify which main trails to use and how many additional trails are needed. Trails not complying with BMPs (i.e., trails in draw bottoms) will only be used if impacts can be adequately mitigated.
3. Skid trails will be kept to 20 percent or less of the harvest unit acreage, have adequate drainage concurrently with operations, and will be limited to slopes of less than 45 percent unless the operation can be completed without causing excessive displacement or erosion.
4. Slash disposal: Limit the combination of disturbance and scarification to 30 to 40 percent of the harvest units. No dozer piling on slopes over 35 percent; no excavator piling on slopes over 40 percent, unless the operation can be completed without causing excessive erosion. Consider lopping and scattering or jackpot burning on the steeper slopes. Consider disturbance incurred during skidding operations to, at least, partially provide scarification for regeneration.
5. Based on the dominant habitat types within the project area, the optimal coarse woody debris range is between 10 and 20 tons per acre (Graham et al., 1994). This takes into account the varied stand conditions within the harvest units.

References:

- DNRC, 1996. Forestry Best Management Practices: State Forest Management Plan. Montana DNRC, Forest management Bureau. Missoula, MT.
- DNRC. 2011. DNRC compiled soils monitoring report on timber harvest projects, 2006-2010, 1st Edition. Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, MT.
- Fenneman, N. M. (1928). Physiographic divisions of the United States. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 18(4), 261-353.
- Graham, R.T., Harvey, A.E., Jorgensen, M.F., Jain, T.B., and Page-Dumrose, D.S., 1994, Managing Course Woody Debris in Forests of the Rocky Mountains. U.S., Forest Service Research Paper INT-RP-477. Intermountain Research Station. 16p.
- Harmon, M.E.; J.F. Franklin, and F. J Swanson. 1986. Ecology of coarse woody debris in temperate ecosystems. *Advances in Ecological Research*, Vol. 15. New York: Academic Press: 133-302.

MBMG. 2007. Geologic Map of Montana - Compact Disc: Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology: Geologic Map 62-C, 73 p., 2 sheets, scale 1:500,000. This map was digitized in 2012 as a result of a contract between the U.S. Geological Survey and the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology.

NRCS. 2024. United States Department of Agriculture. Web Soil Survey. Available online at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/> accessed [10/3/2025]

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY:

Water Quality and Quantity Existing Conditions:

The proposed project is located within the Island Creek Watershed, which is 24,960 acres, 78% forested, receives an average annual precipitation of 19 inches, has 522 grazable acres, and is 77% private, 16% federal, and 7% state-owned. The watershed is classified as B-1, which supports coldwater aquatic life and specifies drinking water as a beneficial use. The State holds stock rights to Island Creek. Island Creek and Island Lake are located on the eastern boundary of the project area. The nearest harvest unit is approximately 350 feet from Island Creek. No harvest will occur in the Stream Management Zone or Riparian Management Zone. Harvest equipment will cross a Class 3 stream in harvest unit 2. Impacts are expected to be temporary and localized.

Water Quality & Quantity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Water Quality	X				X				X					
Water Quantity	X				X				X					
Action														
Water Quality		X				X				X			Yes	W-1
Water Quantity		X				X				X			Yes	W-2

Comments:

W-1: Implementing BMPs by restricting operation windows to dry, frozen, or snow-covered conditions would minimize the risk of both direct and secondary impacts on sediment delivery resulting from skidding and hauling activities.

W-2: Due to the harvest systems utilized, unit size, and distance relative to stream channels, there is a temporary risk of low direct and secondary water quality impacts for the proposed actions. Considering these impacts in combination with past and current activities, the proposed action is not likely to elevate the cumulative watershed effect beyond the existing condition.

Water Quality & Quantity Mitigations:

1. Best Management Practices for Forestry would be implemented and monitored for effectiveness concurrent with all forest management activities.

2. Implementation of Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management and Streamside Management Zones.
3. Implement Montana DNRC Habitat Conservation Plan commitments for Riparian Management Zones and Sediment Delivery.

References:

- DEQ, 2011. Montana Average Annual Precipitation 1981-2010. Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality, Helena, MT
- DEQ, 2012. *Clean Water Act Information Center (<http://cwaic.mt.gov/>), Montana Water Quality Assessment Database. Assessment Record MT76P004_010.*
- DEQ, 2017. Montana Nonpoint Source Management Plan. Montana Department of Environmental Quality, , Watershed Protection Section. Helena, MT.
- DNRC, 1996. Forestry Best Management Practices: State Forest Management Plan. Montana DNRC, Forest management Bureau. Missoula, MT.
- DNRC 2011. DNRC update to the Compiled Monitoring Report. Includes data from 1988 through 2011. Unpublished. Prepared by J. Schmalenberg, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, MT.
- Haupt, H.F., et al., 1974. Forest Hydrology Part II Hydrologic Effects of Vegetation Manipulation. USDA Forest Service, Region 1. Missoula, Montana.
- McCarthy, P.M., Sando, Roy, Sando, S.K., and Dutton, D.M., 2016, Methods for estimating streamflow characteristics at ungaged sites in western Montana based on data through water year 2009: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2015–5019–G, 19 p.
- Raskin, Edward B., Casey J. Clishe, Andrew T. Loch, Johanna M. Bell. 2006. Effectiveness of Timber harvest Practices for Controlling Sediment Related Water Quality Impacts. *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 42(5), 1307–1327.
- USFWS and DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volumes I and II. U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6, Denver, Colorado, and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Missoula, MT. September 2010.

FISHERIES:

Fisheries Existing Conditions:

Fisheries in the area include Westslope cutthroat trout, which are predicted to occupy 9 miles of Island Creek. Island Lake is known to be populated by Northern Pike, Northern Pikeminnow, Largemouth Bass, Yellow perch, Peamouth, Pumpkinseed, and Longnose suckers. The nearest

harvest unit is approximately 350 feet from Island Creek. No harvest will occur in the Stream Management Zone or Riparian Management Zone.

No-Action: No direct or indirect impacts would occur to affected fish species or affected fisheries resources beyond those described in Fisheries Existing Conditions. Cumulative effects (other related past and present factors; other future, related actions; and any impacts described in Fisheries Existing Conditions) would continue to occur.

Action Alternative (see Fisheries table below):

Fisheries	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Sediment	x				x				x					
Flow Regimes	x				x				x					
Woody Debris	x				x				x					
Stream Shading	x				x				x					
Stream Temperature	x				x				x					
Connectivity	x				x				x					
Populations	x				x				x					
Action														
Sediment		x				x				x			Yes	F1
Flow Regimes	x				x				x					F2
Woody Debris	x				x				x					
Stream Shading	x				x				x					
Stream Temperature	x				x				x					
Connectivity	x				x				x					
Populations	x				x				x					

Comments:

F-1: Sediment delivery is possible at stream crossing locations along the haul route. The crossings currently meet BMPS, and maintenance would be completed at the end of the project.

F-2: Refer to water quantity description in the above section.

Fisheries Mitigations:

1. Best Management Practices for Forestry would be implemented and monitored for effectiveness concurrent with all forest management activities.
2. Implementation of Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management and Streamside Management Zones.
3. Implementation of Montana DNRCs Habitat Conservation Plan commitments for Riparian Management Zones and Sediment Delivery.

References:

Fish, Wildlife & Parks." *FISHMT* :: *Waterbody Search*, myfwp.mt.gov/fishMT/explore. Accessed 1 Nov 2025.

USFWS and DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volumes I and II. U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6, Denver, Colorado, and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Missoula, MT. September 2010.

WILDLIFE:

Wildlife Existing Conditions:

The Project Area consists of a single DNRC-managed parcel totaling 640 acres and is comprised of habitat conditions that favor native wildlife species associated with mature and young pole-sized forest habitats with a relatively closed canopy. The parcel is bordered by a mix of forested Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), United States Forest Service (USFS), commercial, and private lands with low-density development and mixed forest management practices. The Project Area contains an estimated 342 acres of mature forest with relatively closed canopies (trees ≥ 9 " dbh with $\geq 40\%$ canopy closure), of which 291 acres are considered old-growth by Green et al. standards (1992). Within these mature stands, occasional pockets of dead and dying Douglas-fir were observed during fieldwork. An estimated 22 acres of open forest (trees ≥ 9 " dbh with $< 40\%$ canopy closure) exists within the Project Area. Additionally, the Project Area contains 247 acres of poletimber stands that were harvested over 40 years ago and now average 30-50 feet in height. The Project Area also contains approximately 31 acres of non-forested riparian area associated with Island Creek. Approximately 6.3 miles of roads are present within the Project Area, of which 2.3 miles are open to public motorized access and 4.0 miles are restricted from public motorized use. Public motorized use of the open roads is likely high due to the proximity to nearby occupied homes and Island Lake campground/fishing access site. Due to this, recreational use of the Project Area is currently moderate and likely increases during hunting season. Restricted roads receive limited motorized use for resource and fire-management purposes.

Cumulative effects analysis areas (CEAA) include lands near the Project Area and include the 5,743-acre Small CEAA for animals with smaller home ranges like pileated woodpeckers and flammulated owls and a 42,384-acre Large CEAA for animals that travel across larger areas such as grizzly bears and big game. Ownership in the Large CEAA consists of 7.4% DNRC, 33.1% USDA Forest Service, 0.1% Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, 49.3% Southern Pines Plantation, 1.7% Green Diamond, and 8.4% private land. Primary land uses in the CEAs are commercial timber harvest and outdoor recreation.

Additional information on cumulative effects analysis areas and analysis methods is available upon request. Overall, the Project Area contains a variety of habitat conditions for native wildlife species.

No-Action: None of the proposed activities would occur. In the short-term, insects and disease will likely continue to kill pockets of mature trees within the Project Area. Additionally, occasional disturbance from small scale firewood collection would be anticipated. Overall, habitat availability for species preferring mature connected forests would likely remain similar. In the long-term, habitat suitability for mature forest-associated species would remain similar or slightly increase compared to current conditions as younger, previously harvested stands continue to

grow and connect mature forest over the next 40-50 years. An increase in stand-replacement wildfire risk would also be anticipated.

Action Alternative (see Wildlife table below):

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number	
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative						
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High			
Threatened and Endangered Species															
Grizzly bear <i>(Ursus arctos)</i> Habitat: Recovery areas, security from human activity			X				X				X			Y	WI-1
Lynx (<i>Felis lynx</i>) Habitat: SF hab.types, dense sapling, old forest, deep snow zone	X				X				X						WI-2
Yellow-billed cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>) Habitat: open cottonwood riparian forest with dense brush understories (Lake and Flathead counties)	X				X				X						WI-2
Sensitive Species															
Bald eagle <i>(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional forest within 1 mile of open water	X				X				X						WI-3
Black-backed woodpecker <i>(Picoides arcticus)</i> Habitat: Mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	X				X				X						WI-2
Common loon <i>(Gavia immer)</i> Habitat: Cold mountain lakes, nest in emergent vegetation	X				X				X						WI-4
Fisher <i>(Martes pennanti)</i> Habitat: Dense mature to old forest			X				X				X			Y	WI-5

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
less than 6,000 feet in elevation and riparian														
Flammulated owl (<i>Otus flammeolus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest		X				X				X				Y WI-6
Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) Habitat: Cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	X				X				X					WI-2
Pileated woodpecker (<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest				X				X				X		Y WI-7
Fringed myotis (<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>) Habitat: low elevation ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and riparian forest with diverse roost sites including outcrops, caves, mines	X				X				X					WI-2
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>) Habitat: coniferous and deciduous forests and roost on foliage in trees, under bark, in snags, bridges			X				X				X			WI-8
Townsend's big-eared bat (<i>Plecotus townsendii</i>) Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	X				X				X					WI-2
Wolverine (<i>Gulo gulo</i>)	X				X				X					WI-2

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Habitat: high elevation areas that retain high snow levels in late spring														
Big Game Species														
Elk			X				X			X				Y WI-9
Whitetail			X				X			X				Y WI-9
Mule Deer			X				X			X				Y WI-9
Moose			X				X			X				Y WI-9
Other														
Mature Forest				X				X			X			WI-10
Old-growth				X				X				X		WI-10
Red-tailed Hawk		X				X				X				Y WI-11

Comments:

WI-1. Grizzly bear – The Project Area is within non-recovery occupied habitat associated with the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem (CYE) (Wittinger 2002). While occasional presence of a grizzly bear in the parcel is possible, appreciable use by grizzly bears would not be expected due to the very low density of bears within the CYE, distance from secure core grizzly bear habitat, and nearby open roads/private lands. Approximately 430 acres of grizzly bear hiding cover would be affected by the proposed activities (73.2% of existing habitat in the Project Area). Of these acres, 290 acres (49.5% of existing hiding cover in the Project Area; 12.0% of the Large CEAA) would be treated with an old-growth restoration treatment and would likely remove habitat attributes that contribute to hiding cover post-harvest. Harvest units were designed such that no point within harvest units would be >600 feet to cover. Retention of patches of submerchantable trees were designed to break up site distances within proposed harvest units. Visual screening would be maintained along open roads; however, the quality of visual screening would be reduced adjacent to approximately 0.2 miles of open road with commercial thinning treatments. Motorized timing restrictions would be applied from April 1 – June 15 in all harvest units to provide security for grizzly bears in the spring. Approximately 0.4 miles of existing open road would be barricaded after timber sale activities, further reducing potential motorized disturbance. Additionally, forest management activities would be allowed for a maximum period of four years following the start of the proposed activities, followed by a mandatory rest period of at least eight years. At the broader spatial scale, 79.2% of the 42,384-acre large CEAA would remain as hiding cover, and measurable changes to grizzly bear use of the CEAA would not be expected as a result of the Action Alternative. DNRC is not aware of any additional proposed or ongoing forest management activities on other ownerships; however, existing human development on commercial or private lands within the CEAA remain the greatest source of potential conflict and mortality risk for grizzly bears.

WI-2. This species was evaluated, and it was determined that the Project Area lies outside of the normal distribution for the species, and/or suitable habitat was not found to be present.

WI-3. Bald Eagle – The proposed harvest is approximately 0.3 miles from the last known nest location for the Island Lake bald eagle pair (MTNHP 2025, DNRC unpublished data). Approximately 39 acres of the Project Area is within the primary use area (ARM 36.11.436(7)), of which no acres would be impacted by the proposed activities. Use of this nest site by

breeding bald eagles was last documented in 2025, and historic observations have been periodically recorded since 1997 at other nesting locations within this territory around Island Lake (MTNHP 2025, DNRC unpublished data). Thus, active use of this nest site and territory by a breeding pair of bald eagles is likely. Eagles using the Island Lake territory are likely habituated to disturbance, as the nest is within 500 feet of an occupied home and 60 feet of an open road. In addition, the nest site is within 200 feet of Island Lake, which receives moderate amounts of recreational activity and motorized disturbance. A topographic break and ample vegetative cover shall remain in place between the nest site and the harvest unit to avoid disturbance from normal activities. Thus, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to bald eagles would be expected to occur as a result of the action alternative.

WI-4. Common Loon – Historically, multiple loon pairs have nested on the shores of Island Lake. The nearest loon pair (Island Lake South territory) were documented and actively nesting in 2025, approximately 0.5 miles from the Project Area and 0.8 miles from the nearest proposed activities. No effects to loons would be anticipated due to this distance and the absence of shoreline disturbance from proposed activities.

WI-5. Fisher – Approximately 293 acres of suitable fisher habitat would be affected by the proposed activities (95.5% of suitable fisher habitat in the Project Area). Of these acres, 274 acres (89.3% of suitable fisher habitat) would be treated with an old-growth restoration treatments and would not be suitable fisher habitat post-harvest due to low amounts of mature conifer cover. Additionally, the proposed activities would affect 61 acres of preferred fisher covertypes that do not currently have the stand structure needed to be considered suitable fisher habitat; thus, prolonging the time until these stands become suitable habitat again. Habitat connectivity within the Project Area would decrease following logging, and existing connectivity outside the Project Area is limited due to recently harvested areas (45.1% of the Small CEAA harvested in the past 40 years). The retention of visual screening within 100 feet of open roads would help to deter hunter and trapper access from open roads. Existing restricted roads would be restricted by gates or berms during and after harvest. Approximately 0.4 miles of existing open roads would be restricted post-harvest. To reduce some potential adverse effects on fishers, at least 2 large snags and 2 large snag recruitment trees per acre (>21 inches dbh) would be retained (*ARM 36.11.411*). These snags and large trees are important habitat features that provide resting and denning sites for fishers (*Olson 2014*). Approximately 36.7% of suitable fisher habitat in the Small CEAA would be affected, and abundance of suitable habitat would become low after the proposed activities, remaining on 692 acres (12.1%) of Small CEAA. However, the likelihood of fishers using the Project Area or Small CEAA is low given that fisher have not been documented in the Small CEAA (*MNHP 2025*). Should any fishers be present within the Small CEAA, habitat alteration and potential disturbance would be additive to recent, ongoing, and proposed forest management projects in the CEAA (see *existing conditions section*).

WI-6. Flammulated Owl – Approximately 83 acres of suitable flammulated owl habitat would be affected by the proposed activities (53.0% of the suitable habitat available within the Project Area). These 83 acres would be treated with a prescription that should retain suitable habitat post-harvest and improve overall conditions for flammulated owls. In addition, 323 acres of flammulated owl habitat that includes preferred covertypes but is currently too dense to be considered suitable habitat would be impacted by the proposed activities. The post-harvest structure of these 323 acres would become suitable for flammulated owl habitat. To retain potential nesting trees for flammulated owls within the project area, at least 2 large snags and 2 large snag recruitment trees per acre (>21 inches dbh) would be retained (*ARM 36.11.411*). If harvesting occurred during the summer or early fall period, flammulated owls could be

temporarily displaced by the proposed activities. Should any flammulated owls be present within the Project Area, habitat alteration and potential disturbance would be additive to any activities occurring or planned on surrounding lands.

WI-7 Pileated woodpeckers – The proposed activities would affect 345 acres of suitable pileated woodpecker habitat (96.1% of habitat available in the Project Area; 25.3% of potential habitat in the Small CEAA). Of these acres, 289 acres would be treated with an old-growth restoration treatment, which would not provide suitable habitat post-harvest, removing one large patch of suitable habitat. Post-harvest, the remaining habitat would exist in scattered smaller patches across the Project Area. These impacts would be additive to cumulative effects further reducing habitat availability and connectivity for pileated woodpeckers in the Small CEAA. Approximately 10.9% of the Project Area and 18.7% of the CEAA would be suitable for pileated woodpecker use post-harvest. To reduce potential adverse effects on pileated woodpeckers, at least 2 large snags and 2 large snag recruitment trees per acre (>21 inches dbh) would be retained and all snags cut for safety reasons would be left in the harvest unit (*ARM 36.11.411*).

WI-8. Hoary bat – The proposed activities would affect approximately 305 acres of potential hoary bat habitat (89.2% of potential habitat available). Hoary bats typically roost in tree foliage (*Bachen et al. 2020*), and if present, they could be temporarily displaced by timber harvesting. Potential disturbance would only be expected from late May through September, when hoary bats are in Montana. After the conclusion of activities, continued use of harvested areas by hoary bats would be anticipated. At least 2 large snags and 2 large snag recruitment trees per acre (>21 inches dbh, or largest size class available) would be retained and could provide roosting habitat (*ARM 36.11.411*). Should any hoary bats be present within the Project Area, habitat alteration and potential disturbance would be additive to any activities occurring or planned within the Large CEAA.

WI-9. Big Game – The Project Area provides winter habitat for moose and elk (100% of the Project Area); additionally, white-tailed and mule deer likely use the area during other times of the year (*DFWP 2008*). The Project Area contains 589 acres (91.6% of the Project Area) that provide at least a marginal degree thermal cover and snow intercept ($\geq 40\%$ canopy closure of pole and mature trees). Timber harvesting would affect 277 acres of high-quality thermal cover and snow intercept ($\geq 60\%$ canopy closure; 95.4% of available high-quality thermal cover in the Project Area), and an additional 155 acres of marginal thermal cover (40%-60% canopy closure) would be affected by the proposed activities (51.7% of available marginal thermal cover in the Project Area). Of these acres, approximately 273 acres of high-quality (94.2% of available high quality) and 18 acres of marginal thermal cover and snow intercept (18.3% of available marginal quality) would be treated with harvest prescriptions that would reduce mature canopy cover below 40%; thus, reducing the capacity of these stands (49.4% of available thermal cover/snow intercept) to provide thermal cover and snow intercept during more severe winter conditions. Approximately 17 acres of high-quality thermal cover (2.6% of the Project Area) would remain within the Project Area post-harvest. An additional 280 acres (44.0% of the Project Area) would provide marginal thermal cover and connectivity between scattered thermal cover areas in the Project Area post-harvest. High-quality thermal cover would remain on approximately 5,462 acres of the Large CEAA (12.9% of the Large CEAA) and moderately connected via 13,404 acres of marginal thermal cover (32% of the Large CEAA). Within the past 40 years, approximately 12,946 acres (30.5%) of the Large CEAA have been harvested. These treatments have impacted winter range thermal cover and snow intercept on approximately 30.5% of moose winter range, 26.3% of elk winter range, 40.6% of white-tailed deer winter range, and 42.5% of mule deer winter range. Habitat alterations due to the proposed action would be additive to recent, ongoing, and proposed forest management projects in the CEAA.

Hiding cover would be altered by the proposed activities on 430 acres (73.2% of hiding cover in the Project Area). Proposed harvest treatments would remove hiding cover on 292 acres (49.5%), however retaining some small patches of regenerating conifers and submerchantable trees within the harvest units would decrease site distances and maintain some cover. Sufficient vegetation would be retained on 297 acres (46.3% of the Project Area) to continue providing hiding cover for big game post-harvest. The reduction in hiding cover could result in increased mortality risk to big game species due to hunting, particularly where open and restricted roads facilitate hunter access. Neither permanent road nor temporary road would be built in the Project Area under the proposed Action Alternative. Existing restricted roads would continue to be restricted by gates or berms during and after harvest activities. Approximately 0.4 miles of existing open road would be restricted by gates or berms after timber sale activities, further reducing public motorized access within the Project Area. Hiding cover would remain on approximately 79.2 % of the Large CEAA post-harvest. Alterations to hiding cover due to the proposed action would be additive to recent, ongoing, and proposed forest management projects in the CEAA.

WI-10. Mature Forest / Old-growth – The proposed action would alter approximately 305 acres of mature forest (89.2% of mature forest within the Project Area; 30.5% of mature forest within the Small CEAA) with a reasonably closed canopy ($\geq 40\%$ canopy closure of trees greater than 65 feet in height). Harvest prescriptions on 278 acres would reduce mature live tree densities with post-harvest canopy closures of $< 40\%$ and would no longer be considered suitable for species that prefer dense mature forests (81.3% of existing mature forest in the Project Area). Post-harvest, approximately 65 acres (10.0% of the Project Area) would remain classified as mature forest. The removal of mature forest as a result of the proposed activities would be additive to the 2,592 acres (45.1%) recently harvested within the Small CEAA over the past 40 years. However, habitat suitability for species utilizing younger stands and open forest with widely scattered mature trees would increase. Of these acres, harvest prescriptions would impact a large 277-acre patch of old-growth forest (95.2% of the potential old-growth in the Project Area). All these old-growth acres would be treated with an old-growth restoration treatment in which at least 8 large live trees > 21 inches dbh would be retained per acre or a minimum of 60 square-feet of basal area, reducing canopy cover to less than 40% on average. Within these acres, old-growth attributes such as age and stocking density would be maintained to meet old-growth standards (Green et al. 1992). However, habitat quality would be reduced for wildlife species that prefer dense old-growth stands. To reduce adverse impacts on wildlife associated with old-growth at least 2 large snags and 2 large snag recruitment trees per acre (> 21 inches dbh) would be retained and all snags cut for safety reasons would be left in the harvest unit (*ARM 36.11.411*). Stands with pole-sized trees (DBH from 5.0 to 8.99 inches) would remain moderately connected to 1,585 acres of similar sized stands within the Small CEAA (27.6% of the Small CEAA). Connectivity within the Project Area would become limited to smaller patches of pole-sized stands and mature riparian habitat. Habitat alterations due to the proposed action would be additive to recent, ongoing, and proposed forest management projects in the Small CEAA.

WI-11. Red-tailed Hawk – An active red-tailed hawk nest was discovered within the Project Area unit in 2025. Harvest operations would be prohibited within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of the nest site from April 1 to August 15 (if the nest is found to be active each breeding season). The nest is not within a proposed cutting unit, but care would be taken not to harm the nest tree during the proposed activities. With these mitigations, the risk of disturbance to breeding red-tailed hawk would be considered low. Red-tailed hawks forage in open forests and non-forested areas; therefore, the proposed treatments could improve foraging habitat. Continued use of the Project Area and current territory by red-tailed hawks would be expected during and after harvest.

Wildlife Mitigations:

- If a threatened or endangered species is encountered, consult a DNRC biologist immediately. Similarly, if undocumented nesting raptors or wolf dens are encountered within ½ mile of the Project Area, contact a DNRC biologist.
- Contractors will adhere to food storage and sanitation requirements as described in the timber sale contract. Ensure that all attractants such as food, garbage, and petroleum products are stored in a bear-resistant manner.
- Prohibit contractors and purchasers conducting contract operations from carrying firearms while on duty as per ARM 36.11.432(1)(c).
- Commercial forest management activities (including log hauling) shall be excluded from April 1- June 15 in all harvest units to provide security to grizzly bears during the spring period unless the activity is less than 100 feet from an open road.
- Conduct commercial forest management activities for a maximum management period of four years, followed by a mandatory rest period of at least eight years, per ARM 36.11.432(6)(c).
- Evaluate each open road segment to assess the potential to restrict access to that segment. For roads that remain open after the project has concluded, document rationale as to why open roads were left open.
- Effectively close restricted roads and skid trails in the Project Area via a combination of gates, kelly humps, rocks, and stumps. Maintain public motorized restrictions on restricted and temporary roads during and after harvest activities.
- Retain at least 2 snags and 2 snag recruits per acre >21 inches dbh or the next largest available size class, particularly favoring ponderosa pine, western larch and Douglas-fir for retention.
- No point in a unit with <25 TPA can be more than 600 feet to hiding cover or a topographic break, GB-NR4 (USFWS and DNRC 2010).
- Retain at least 2 snags and 2 snag recruits per acre >21 inches dbh or the next largest available size class, particularly favoring ponderosa pine, western larch and Douglas-fir for retention. If snags are cut for safety concerns, they must be left in the harvest unit.
- Retain 10-20 tons/acre of coarse-woody debris and emphasize retention of 15-inch diameter downed logs, aiming for at least one 20-foot-long section per acre LY-HB2 (USFWS and DNRC 2010). High-hazard clean up areas are exempt from standard coarse-woody debris retention guidelines.
- Protect all raptor nest trees and their nests.
- Avoid prolonged administrative motorized activities within sight of any nest tree.
- Prohibit motorized forest management activities (including road maintenance, timber hauling, and site preparation) that utilize existing roads within the designated buffers surrounding the nest locations between April 1 and August 15 for any active raptor nests. Nesting activity will be checked annually by a DNRC biologist and timing restrictions will be relaxed if the nest site is not active or the nest is damaged/destroyed by natural causes.

Literature:

- Bachen, D.A., A. McEwan, B. Burkholder, S. Blum, and B. Maxell. 2020. Accounts of Bat Species Found in Montana. Report to Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Montana Natural Heritage Program, Helena, Montana. 58 p.
- DFWP. 2008. Maps of moose, elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer distribution in Montana. *In* Individual GIS data layers. Available online at:

<https://gis-mtfwp.opendata.arcgis.com/>

Green, P., J. Joy, D. Sirucek, W. Hann, A. Zack, and B. Naumann. 1992 Old-growth forest types of the northern region (errata corrected 02/05, 12/07, 10/08, 12/11). USDA Forest Service, Northern Region. Report R-1 SES.

Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP). 2025. Environmental Summary Report. for Latitude 48.15925 to 48.31691 and Longitude -114.82312 to -115.18545. Retrieved on 10/27/2025, from <http://mtnhp.org/MapView>.

Olson, L. E., J. D. Sauder, N. M. Albrecht, R. S. Vinkey, S. A. Cushman, and M. K. Schwartz. 2014. Modeling the effects of dispersal and patch size on predicted fisher (*Pekania [Martes] pennanti*) distribution in the U.S. Rocky Mountains. *Biological Conservation* 169:89-98.

USFWS and DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volumes I and II., U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6, Denver, Colorado and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Missoula, MT.

Wittinger, W. 2002. Grizzly bear distribution outside of recovery zones. Unpublished memorandum. Report on file at Unpublished memorandum on file at USDA Forest Service, Region 1, Missoula, MT.

AIR QUALITY:

Air Quality	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Smoke	X				X				X					
Dust	X				X				X					
Action														
Smoke		X				X				X			Y	AQ-1
Dust		X			X				X				Y	AQ-2

Comments:

AQ-1: The project area is in Montana Airshed Zone 1. Slash piles consisting of tree limbs, tops and other vegetative debris would be created throughout the project area during harvesting. These slash piles would ultimately be burned in accordance with the Montana Airshed coordination group and the Libby Impact Zone after harvesting operations have been completed. Burning that may occur on adjacent properties in combination with the proposed action could potentially increase cumulative impacts to the local airshed. Thus, cumulative impacts to air quality due to slash pile burning associated with the proposed action would also be expected to be minimal.

AQ-2: Dust may be generated by log hauling activities during dry conditions. However, because dust would be localized to skid trails and haul roads and operating seasons would be short in duration, effects to air quality as a result of dust generated during harvest activities are expected to be low.

Air Quality Mitigations:

- Burning within the project area would be short in duration and would be conducted when conditions favor good ventilation and smoke dispersion. Actions would adhere to the Montana/Idaho State Airshed Group regulations and Montana Department of Environmental Quality.
- The DNRC, would burn only on approved days. DNRC would also follow Lincoln County air quality regulations. Thus, direct, secondary, and cumulative effects to air quality due to slash pile burning associated with the proposed action would be minimal.
- Dust abatement may be required on portions of roads effecting subdivision residences if deemed necessary by the Forest Officer.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES / AESTHETICS / DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

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		
No-Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X					
Aesthetics	X				X				X					
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X					
Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites		X				X				X			Y	A-1
Aesthetics		X				X				X			Y	A-2
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X					

Comments:

A-1: Tribal agencies on the statewide scoping list were scoped, none identified a specific cultural resource concern. A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. Because of the past logging history of the tract, the overall steep terrain (from an archaeological perspective), lack of springs, and lack of geology that would suggest caves, rock shelters, or sources of tool stone, no additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development.

A-2: The project area, proposed units, and roads would be visible from the open roads listed: Old Railroad Grade Rd, Coniff Creek Rd, and ACM Rd. Unit 3 (Commercial thin) would be visible from open roads near the project area and from properties near the harvest units. Active forest management is prevalent in this area. Within the project area, harvest treatment near the open roads would open the stands to approximately 70 trees per acre or 25 foot spacing.

Mitigations:

- If previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.
- Following harvest, roads, landings, and slash would be visible, but forest improvement work and burning of slash piles and landings would be planned within a few years of harvest and this would speed up the recovery of the vegetation that would eventually mitigate the aesthetic impacts of logging.
- Harvested stands would naturally regenerate following harvest. If natural regeneration is not successful, tree planting may be implemented to facilitate regeneration.

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.*

- DNRC is unaware of other environmental documents pertinent to this area.

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		
No-Action														
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					

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			
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						
Action															
Health and Human Safety		X			X				X					Y	H-1
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production		X			X				X					Y	H-2
Quantity and Distribution of Employment		X			X				X					Y	H-3
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						

Comments:

H-1: No unusual safety concerns are associated with the proposed project. Health and safety risks posed by the project would be minimal.

H-2: A consistent flow of timber contributes to the supply and demand of these timber products.

H-3: The proposed project would open employment opportunities locally in the logging industry.

Mitigations: N/A

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.*

- DNRC is unaware of any zoning or management plans pertaining to this area.

Other Appropriate Social and Economic Circumstances:

Costs, revenues and estimates of return are estimates intended for relative comparison of alternatives. They are not intended to be used as absolute estimates of return. The estimated stumpage is based on comparable sales analysis. This method compares recent sales to find a market value for stumpage. These sales have similar species, quality, average diameter, product mix, terrain, date of sale, distance from mills, road building and logging systems, terms of sale, or anything that could affect a buyer's willingness to pay.

No Action: The No Action alternative would not generate any return to the trust at this time.

Action: The timber harvest would generate additional revenue for the **Common Schools** Trust. The estimated return to the trust for the proposed harvest is **\$407,150** based on an estimated harvest of **2.5 million** board feet (16,286 tons) and an overall stumpage value of **\$25.00** per ton. Costs, revenues, and estimates of return are estimates intended for relative comparison of alternatives, they are not intended to be used as absolute estimates of return.

References

DNRC 1996. State forest land management plan: final environmental impact statement (and appendixes). Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan: Final EIS, Volume II, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects that are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?

None that are known or anticipated

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?

None that are known or anticipated

Environmental Assessment Checklist Prepared By:

Name: Jessica Mannion
Title: Management Forester
Date: November 22, 2025

Finding

Alternative Selected

Upon review of the Checklist EA and appendices, I find that the action alternative as proposed meets the intent of the project objectives as stated on page 1, Type and Purpose of Action. It complies with all the pertinent environmental laws, DNRC State Forest Land Management Plan, and a consensus of professional opinion on limits of acceptable environmental impact.

The land involved in this project is held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of specific beneficiary institutions and DNRC is required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return. An estimated amount of \$407,150 would be generated for the Common Schools Trust.

The No Action Alternative does not meet the project objectives. For these reasons I have selected the Action Alternative for implementation on this project.

Significance of Potential Impacts

After a thorough review of the scoping documents, department policies, standards, guidelines, and the State Forest Land Management Plan, I find all the identified resource management concerns have been addressed in this Checklist EA and its attachments.

The Action Alternative provides for incomes to the Common Schools Trust and promotes the development of a healthy, biologically diverse, and productive forest. It also provides the opportunity to improve access through road maintenance within the project area.

I find there will be no significant impacts to the human environment as a result of implementing the Action Alternative. Specific project design features and various resource management specialist recommendations have been implemented to ensure that this project will fall within the limits of acceptable environmental change and result in no significant effects.

Need for Further Environmental Analysis

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:

Name: Logan Sandman

Title: Libby Unit Manager

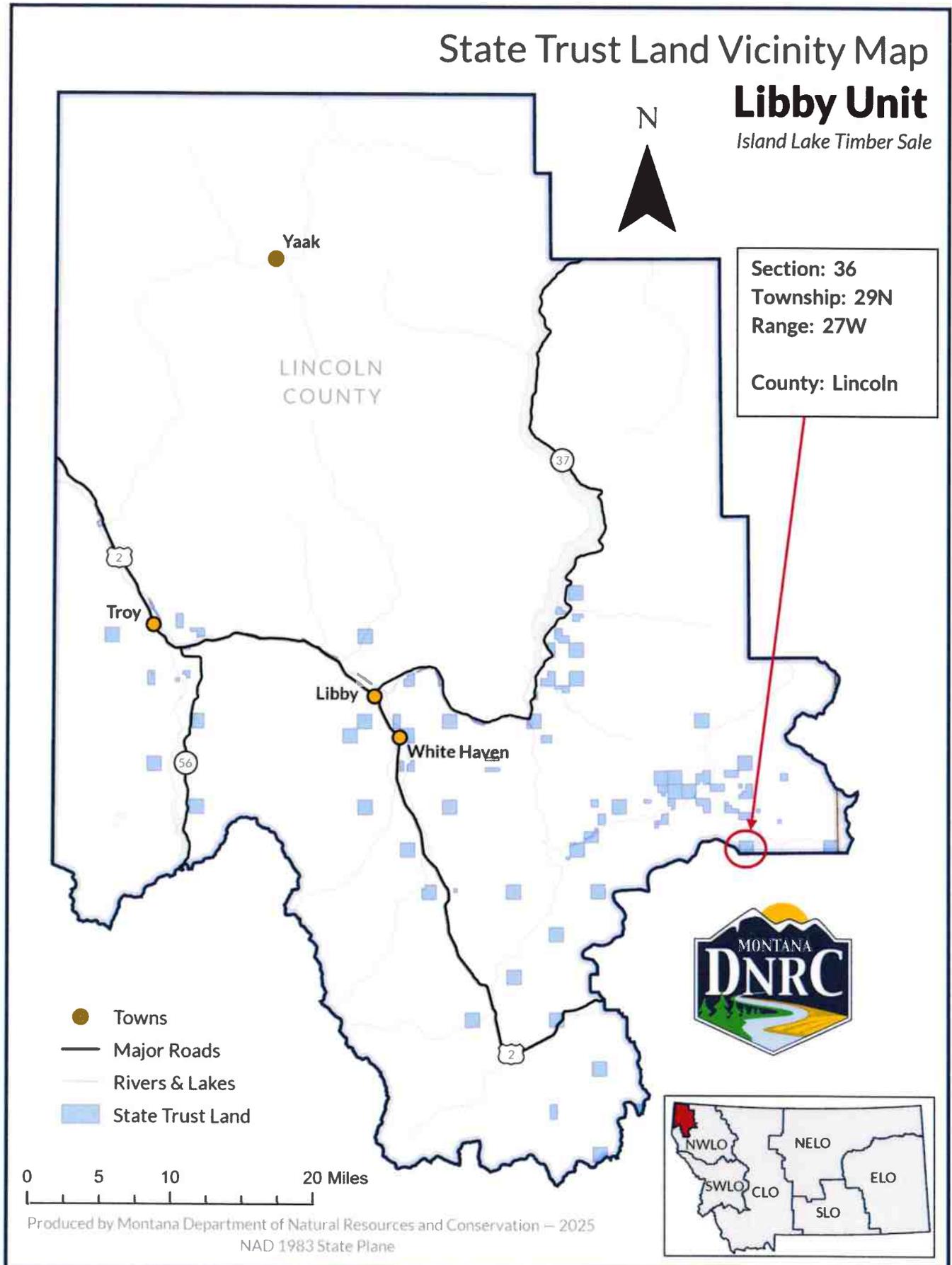
Date: January 22nd, 2026

Signature: /s/



Attachment A - Maps

A-1: Timber Sale Vicinity Map

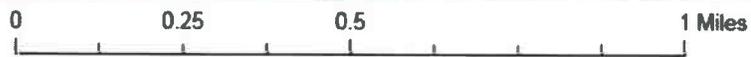
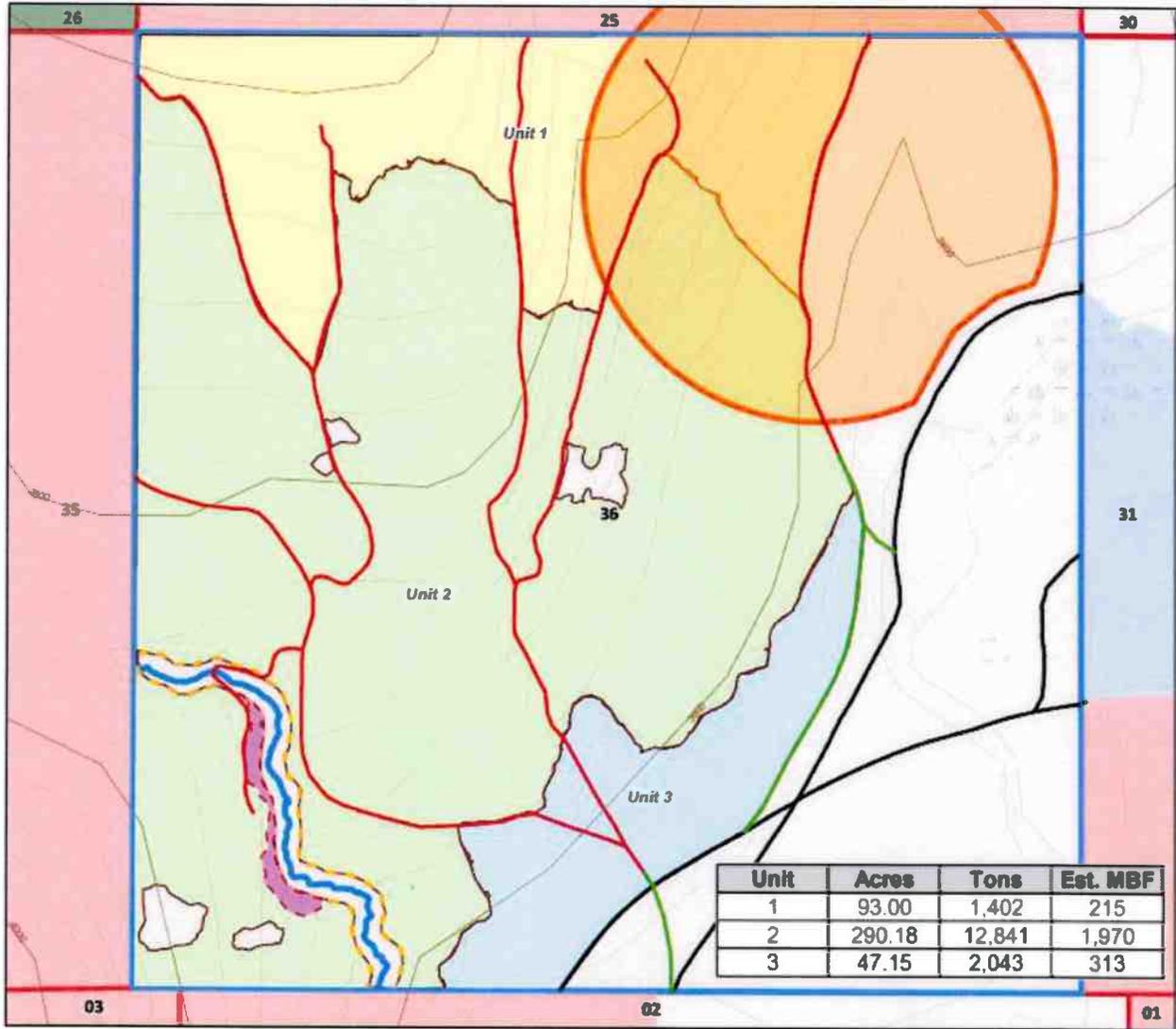


A-2: Timber Sale Harvest Units

Island Lake Timber Sale - Project Overview

T29N R27W Section 36

Attachment A

N

-  Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
-  Montana State Trust Lands
-  US Forest Service
-  SPP
-  Unit 1
-  Unit 2
-  Unit 3
-  Nest - Seasonal Restriction
-  ERZ
-  SMZ - NO Harvest
-  Class 3 Stream
-  Restricted Road Maintenance
-  Existing Roads
-  Open Road Maintenance


 DNRC Libby Unit
 11/24/2025