

Environmental Assessment Checklist

Project Name: Johnson's Draw Timber Sale
Proposed Implementation Date: May - June, 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 Johnson's Draw Timber Sale. The project is located approximately 9.5 Miles southeast of Libby, MT. (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	N2N2_S2S2, Section 36, T30N, R30W	320	320
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 \$260,000.00 - \$390,000.00 in revenue for the Common Schools Trust
- Increase accessibility to the parcel
- Sell approximately 2 - 3 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 a 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	320
Selection	
Old Growth Maintenance/Restoration	
Commercial Thinning	
Salvage	
Total Treatment Acres	
Proposed Forest Improvement Treatment	# Acres
Pre-commercial Thinning	
Site preparation/scarification	142
Planting	
Proposed Road Activities	# Miles
New permanent road construction	1
New temporary road construction	
Road maintenance	13.5
Road reconstruction	
Road abandoned	
Road reclaimed	
Other Activities	

Duration of Activities:	2-5 years
Implementation Period:	May – June, 2026

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 5, 2025 – April 7, 2025.
- PUBLIC SCOPED:
 - The scoping notice was posted on the DNRC Website:
<https://dnrc.mt.gov/News/scoping-notice>
 - Adjacent landowners, statewide scoping list, posted on DNRC website
- AGENCIES SCOPED:
 - Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
 - US Forest Service
 - Lincoln County
 - All Montana Tribal Organizations
 - Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)
- COMMENTS RECEIVED:
 - How many: 1 Comment received
 - Concerns: An adjacent Landowner (Stimson Lumber Company) stated that if the Jonson's Draw Parcel were to be advertised with the Island Lake Parcel as one timber sale contract, Stimson Lumber Company would not be interested in bidding on the timber sale.
 - Results The two parcels were separated into two distinct timber sales.

DNRC specialists were consulted, including: Logan Sandman (Decision Maker), Josh Harris (Hydrologist), Justin Cooper (Biologist), Tim Spoelma (Silviculturist), Emilia Grzesik (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.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No-Action Alternative: The proposed actions would not be implemented. No revenue would be generated for the Common Schools Trust. No timber would be harvested.

Action Alternative: A timber sale generating approximately 2-3 million board feet of timber would be harvested thus creating revenue for the Common Schools Trust. The proposed timber sale would utilize a light retention shelterwood harvest prescription to reduce insects and disease, harvest the value of the impacted trees, and open the stands to allow for the healthy, dominant trees to persist as seed trees. In addition to the proposed harvest, there would be approximately 1 mile of permanent new road construction, and approximately 13.5 miles of existing road maintenance.

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:

Comments: Details of timber harvest:

Harvest Unit	Habitat Group	Fire Regime	Current Cover Type	Age Class (years)	DFC	RX	Acres
1	Moderately warm and dry (westside)	Mixed	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	100-149	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	Shelterwood Harvest	113
2	Moderately warm and dry (westside)	Low	Douglas Fir	100-149	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	Shelterwood Harvest	18
3	Moderately warm and dry (westside)	Low	Douglas Fir	150-199	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	Shelterwood Harvest	29
4	Moderately warm and dry (westside)	Mixed	Douglas Fir	100-149	Ponderosa Pine	Shelterwood Harvest	137
5	Moderately warm and dry (westside)	Mixed	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	100-149	Ponderosa Pine	Shelterwood Harvest	9
6	Warm and moist (westside)	Mixed	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	100-149	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	Shelterwood Harvest	14

Fire Hazard/Fuels: Stands to be treated consist of well stocked, mature overstory trees. Understory vegetation overall is sparse. There are pockets of mostly shade tolerant regeneration. A closed canopy limits the growth of regeneration and increases connectivity for the likelihood of a stand replacing wildfire. Stands are adjacent to private industrial and United States Forest Service land.

Insects and Diseases: Douglas-fir beetle (*Dendroctonus psuedotsugae*) is active in mature Douglas fir. Larch dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium laricis*) is present in western larch. To a lesser degree, Western pine beetle (*Dendroctonus brevicomis*) is present in patches of ponderosa pine.

Sensitive/Rare Plants: No TES or plant species of concern have been identified by the MNHP in the project area.

Noxious Weeds: Spotted knapweed and St. Johnswort is present in the project area, mostly along existing Roads.

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					
Fire/Fuels		X			X				X				Y	V-2
Insects/Disease		X				X				X			Y	V-3
Rare Plants	X				X				X					
Noxious Weeds	X				X				X					
Action														
Current Cover/DFCs		X				X				X			Y	V-1
Age Class	X				X				X					
Old Growth	X				X				X					
Fire/Fuels		X			X				X				Y	V-2
Insects/Disease		X				X				X			Y	V-3
Rare Plants	X				X				X					
Noxious Weeds		X				X				X			Y	V-4

Comments:

Light Retention Shelterwood Treatment: Prescription will protect existing, desirable, healthy regeneration and provide daylight conditions for desirable tree species. Overstory leave tree selection would favor retention of healthy, vigorous, dominant trees, most often, the tallest trees from the largest diameter class available. Leave tree species selection would be in the following order of preference: ponderosa pine (PP), western larch (WL), and Douglas fir (DF). Leave tree spacing would vary depending on overall tree condition and species. The average tree spacing would range between 45-55 feet. Natural regeneration would be encouraged but hand planting tree seedlings would be utilized to promote desired species and stocking levels as needed.

Vegetation Mitigations:

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

V-2: No action will have low direct impacts as the mortality continues to increase each year due to forest health concerns. This aids in the accumulation of fuels, adding to the fire and fuel hazard.

V-3: Insect and disease threats would be significantly reduced through proposed harvest, hazard reduction, and reforestation.

V-4: Noxious weeds would be managed through contract mitigations and through ongoing, cooperative efforts. To prevent the spread of noxious weeds from roads "off-road" logging equipment will be inspected and required to be free of weed parts prior to mobilizing to the site.

SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:

Soil Disturbance and Productivity Existing Conditions:

The area is located on the Helena and Wallace formations. The primary rock types include dolomitic quartzite, siltite, and argillite with calcite ribbons. Generally, forest soils are highly productive, deep, and well-drained throughout the area. These soils represent a spectrum of soil maturity and fertility. Andic Dystrochrepts are young, weakly developed soils of steep mountain slopes, characterized by their high acidity and the influence of volcanic materials, which results in a low-density, nutrient-poor substrate that typically supports coniferous forests. Due to their location on steep terrain, these Dystrochrepts pose a high risk of physical disturbance and erosion, particularly mass wasting and severe gully erosion, if the protective vegetative cover is removed. Conversely, Eutric Glossoboralfs, forming on the more stable deposits of glacial moraines, are moderately developed forest soils that have successfully translocated clay into a fertile subsoil layer, maintaining a higher natural nutrient content that makes them better suited for productive forest ecosystems. While more stable, these Glossoboralfs are still vulnerable to moderate erosion from silty-sediment runoff when disturbed, and their accessibility on gentler slopes increases the risk of soil compaction from heavy machinery.

Forest management activities in this area have been ongoing since the early 1950s; evidence of historical activity, such as old skid trail corridors, remains visible on the landscape despite some natural recovery. The current proposal involves a high-intensity harvest totaling approximately 320 acres across six units, projected to yield 3 million board feet (mmbf) of timber. To achieve this, the timber will be removed using different methods: 178 acres will be cable-yarded, 119 acres will be tractor-yarded, and the remaining 23 acres will utilize a combination of techniques. Infrastructure work includes 13.5 miles of maintenance on existing roads and the construction of 1 mile of new, permanent road. Furthermore, up to 142 acres will undergo mechanical site preparation after harvesting.

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

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		
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 11.98% for similar 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 Lower Fisher River and Upper Kootenai River watersheds, which are 39,680 and 32,640 acres, respectively. The Lower Fisher River watershed is 68% forested, receives an average annual precipitation of 20 inches, and is 73% private, 26% federal, and 2% state-owned. The Upper Kootenai River watershed is 74% forested, receives an average annual precipitation of 19 inches, and is 41% private, 54% federal, and 5% state-owned. Both watersheds are classified as B-1, which supports cold-water aquatic life and specifies drinking water as a beneficial use. No harvest will occur within the SMZ or RMZ of any stream. No water rights have been identified in or adjacent to the project area.

No-Action Alternative: No direct or indirect impacts would occur to hydrologic resources beyond those described in Water Quality and Quantity Existing Conditions. Cumulative effects

(other related past and present factors; other future, related actions; and any impacts described in Water Quality and Quantity Existing Conditions would continue to occur.

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				N/A	
Water Quantity	X				X				X				N/A	
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:

Species of concern in the area include Bull trout and Westslope cutthroat trout, which are known to occupy both watersheds. However, the nearest harvest unit is approximately 4,000 feet from Buck Creek, and potential impacts are likely limited to the haul route.

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				N/A	
Flow Regimes	x				x				x				N/A	
Woody Debris	x				x				x				N/A	
Stream Shading	x				x				x				N/A	
Stream Temperature	x				x				x				N/A	
Connectivity	x				x				x				N/A	
Populations	x				x				x				N/A	
Action														

Fisheries	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number	
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative						
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High			
Sediment		x				x				x				Yes	F-1
Flow Regimes	x				x				x						F-2
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*, myfwf.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 two DNRC-managed parcels totaling 320 acres. The Project Area is comprised of habitat conditions that favor native wildlife species that use forested areas containing mature trees with a variety of canopy closure levels. The Project Area is located near a prominent peak between Johnson's Draw and Buck Creek with proposed harvest units located on almost all aspects and elevations ranging from 3,800 to 5,170 feet. Overall, most of the stands proposed for harvest are warm and dry Douglas-fir and western larch stands with scattered ponderosa pine and limited shade-tolerant trees such as

grand fir in the understory. The Project Area contains 299 acres of mature forest stands (trees $\geq 9''$ dbh with $\geq 40\%$ canopy closure). There is no old-growth forest using Green et al. (1992) standards. The remaining 21 acres of the Project Area are comprised of grassy openings, roads, and pockets of younger trees. The area surrounding the Project Area is comprised mostly of industrial timberlands with a long history of intensive forest management and mature forest is limited on adjacent ownerships. Approximately 1.6 miles of roads are present within the Project Area, all of which are restricted from public motorized use. Restricted roads receive occasional motorized use for resource and fire-management purposes. Public non-motorized use is likely low in this parcel except during the big game hunting season when it likely elevates. Cumulative effects analysis areas incorporate lands near the Project Area and include a smaller 5,607-acre area for animals with smaller home ranges like pileated woodpeckers and a larger 37,084-acre area for animals that travel across larger areas such as Canada lynx and big game. Stimson Lumber manages 83% and 69% of the Medium CEAA and Large CEAA, respectively. Both CEAs are managed primarily for timber production by Stimson Lumber (68.6% of the Large CEAA) and the U.S. Forest Service (16.4% of the Large CEAA). Additional information on cumulative effects analysis areas and analysis methods is available upon request. All impacts would be additive to any proposed or ongoing activities in the CEAs. Overall, conditions within the Project Area favor wildlife species using habitat with larger trees and more dense forest; however, the history of management on surrounding lands leaves the Project Area with limited connectivity as two disjunct patches of mature forest surrounded by younger regenerating stands.

No-Action Alternative: None of the proposed activities would occur. In the short-term, no changes to the amounts, quality, or spatial arrangement of mature forested habitat would occur. In the long-term and in the absence of natural disturbance, habitat availability would increase for species preferring mature forests as growing young stands begin restoring connectivity with other patches of mature forest over the next 60 to 80 years.

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	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			
(Lake and Flathead counties)															
Sensitive Species															
Bald eagle <i>(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional forest within 1 mile of open water	X				X					X					WI-2
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-2
Fisher <i>(Martes pennanti)</i> Habitat: Dense mature to old forest less than 6,000 feet in elevation and riparian		X				X					X				WI-3
Flammulated owl <i>(Otus flammeolus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest		X				X					X			Y	WI-4
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				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			
ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest															
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				Y	WI-6
Townsend's big-eared bat <i>(Plecotus townsendii)</i> Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	X				X					X					WI-2
Wolverine (<i>Gulo gulo</i>) Habitat: high elevation areas that retain high snow levels in late spring	X				X					X					WI-2
Big Game Species															
Elk			X				X				X			Y	WI-7
Whitetail			X				X				X			Y	WI-7
Mule Deer			X				X				X			Y	WI-7
Moose			X				X				X			Y	WI-7
Other															
Mature Forest				X				X			X			Y	WI-8

Comments:

WI-1. Grizzly Bear – The project area is not within a recovery zone and is over 6 miles from non-recovery occupied habitat (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 absence of preferred habitat and distance from occupied grizzly bear habitat. As grizzly bears continue to expand their range outside of recovery zones, bears could occasionally travel

through the parcel during their long-range movements, but appreciable changes to potential movement patterns would not be anticipated.

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. Fisher – Approximately 124 acres of potential fisher habitat would be affected by the proposed activities (100% of fisher habitat available in the Project Area; 20% of habitat in the Medium CEAA). All these acres would be treated with shelterwood treatments and would not provide suitable fisher habitat post-harvest due to low tree retention. Considering the history of timber harvest in the area and that many of the stands are dry forest types typically avoided by fishers (*Olson et al. 2014*), the area is not likely to be used by fishers. No observations have been reported within the 37,084-acre large cumulative effects analysis areas (hereafter Large CEAA) over the last 40 years (MNHP 2025). Connectivity would remain limited. To reduce potential adverse effects on fishers at least all snags and 2 large snag recruitment trees per acre (>21 inches dbh) would be retained (*ARM 36.11.411*). Snags are important habitat features that provide resting and denning sites for fishers.

WI-4. Flammulated Owls – The proposed timber harvest would affect approximately 256 acres (100% of habitat in the Project Area) of preferred flammulated owl cover types. All these acres are currently too densely forested to be considered suitable for flammulated owl use. All 256 acres of flammulated owl cover types would undergo harvest treatments that would maintain or improve habitat suitability by creating more open forest structure. Suitable flammulated owl habitat would persist on 80.0% of the Project Area with an overall improvement in habitat conditions. Preservation of large snags and patches of submerchantable trees (if available) in these units could conserve forest structure favoring use by flammulated owls. All treatments would reduce tree density within the stand and would favor seral species, which would create more open forest stand conditions potentially beneficial to flammulated owls in the long term. To retain potential nesting trees for flammulated owls, 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 temporarily be displaced by the proposed activities. Within the 5,607-acre small cumulative effects analysis area (hereafter Small CEAA), a minimum of 350 acres of forest stands appear to be potentially suitable for flammulated owls, however, snags available for nesting are likely limited in some areas due to differing snag conservation philosophies on surrounding private ownerships.

WI-5. Pileated Woodpecker – The proposed activities would affect 286 acres of suitable pileated woodpecker habitat (100% of habitat available in the Project Area). These acres would be treated with harvest prescriptions retaining approximately 17 mature trees per acre and would be unsuitable for pileated woodpeckers post-harvest. To decrease potential adverse effects on pileated woodpeckers, 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 all snags cut for safety reasons would be left in the harvest unit (*ARM 36.11.411*). Additionally, 10 to 20 tons per acre of downed wood would be retained, with an emphasis on logs >15" diameter. The Project Area would no longer support breeding pileated woodpeckers if they are currently present. Habitat availability within the Small CEAA is limited due to past timber harvesting on surrounding private lands; however, approximately 790 acres (14.1% of the Small CEAA) would remain as suitable habitat. Habitat alterations due to the proposed action would be additive to recent forest management projects on adjacent private lands. Overall, continued use of the small CEAA by pileated woodpeckers would be anticipated.

WI-6. Hoary bat – The proposed activities would affect approximately 299 acres of potential hoary bat habitat. Because hoary bats typically roost in trees and snags, they could be temporarily disturbed by timber harvesting. Potential disturbance would only be expected from June 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. Hoary bats are considered common and widespread throughout Montana, but wind energy development poses a threat to their population (Bachen et al 2020).

WI-7. Big Game – The proposed activities would reduce thermal cover and snow intercept on potential white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose, and elk winter range (*DFWP 2008*). The Project Area is part of a large winter range extending north and south of the Project Area along the Fisher River. The Project Area likely accumulates more snow in comparison to the surrounding area at lower elevations; therefore, it may not be used by wintering animals when snowpack is deep. However, it is likely utilized during warmer months of the year as thermal cover by big game species. Approximately 320 acres of thermal cover (100% of thermal cover available in the Project Area; 5.4% of habitat in the Large CEAA) would be impacted by the timber sale. All these acres would be treated with shelterwood treatments and would not provide thermal cover post-harvest due to the low (<15%) retention of mature canopy cover. Wind intercept and needle-foraging opportunities would be reduced adversely impacting the capacity of these stands to provide high-quality winter range. Logging activities could displace big game species for up to 3 years and may displace animals during critical winter periods depending upon the timing of activities. Given the history of timber harvest within the Large CEAA, connectivity of thermal cover and winter snow intercept across the greater landscape would remain low post-harvest (25.5%). Approximately 320 acres (100%) of hiding cover would be impacted by the proposed activities. Harvest prescriptions would likely remove existing hiding cover within the Project Area. However, hiding cover would remain moderate and well connected across the Large CEAA post-harvest (57.4%). Additionally, 1.6 miles of restricted roads would become active with motorized use during harvest activities. Approximately 1.0 miles of new restricted roads would be built under the Action Alternative, increasing the road density in the Project Area from 3.3 to 5.3 miles per square mile. All roads within the Project area would be restricted to public motorized traffic during and after harvest. Impacts to hiding cover and thermal cover/snow intercept under the Action Alternative would be additive to any ongoing vegetation management projects on lands within the larger 37,084-acre surrounding area. Hiding cover would remain relatively abundant within the large CEAA, however high-quality thermal cover/snow intercept would continue to somewhat low (25.5% of the Large CEAA) on big game winter range due to past timber management and environmental conditions that limit the development and growth of dense forest conditions. Overall, measurable big game population changes at the scale of the large CEAA would not be expected because of the action alternative.

WI-8. Mature Forest – The proposed action would harvest approximately 299 acres of mature forest (100% of mature forest within the Project Area) with a reasonably closed canopy ($\geq 40\%$ canopy closure). Harvest prescriptions for all acres would reduce live tree densities and bring overstory canopy cover below 40%. Thus, these stands would no longer be suitable for wildlife species preferring dense mature forest with more shaded canopies. Total crown closure in most areas would not meet 40% canopy closure with the retention of submerchantable and regenerating conifers in the understory. All existing mature stands would contain approximately 15% canopy closure of mature trees post-harvest and would not return to mature status within the next 80 years. Under the proposed Action Alternative, habitat suitability for species utilizing

more open forest with intermediate amounts of mature trees would increase. Connectivity of mature forest would be reduced, as larger patches of mature forest in the Project Area would be removed by harvesting. Proposed harvesting would alter approximately 37.7% of existing mature forest within the Small CEAA. Existing connectivity and abundance of mature forest within the small CEAA was already low, especially adjacent to the Project Area where dry habitat types and private industrial timberlands prevail. Mature forest abundance would remain low (8.8%) with limited connectivity after harvest through much of the small CEAA. Drier, open slopes and forest management projects on private lands have limited mature forest and harvesting continues to alter mature forest stands within the Small CEAA; the proposed action would be additive to these changes at the broader spatial scale.

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 36.11.444(2)*.
- 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 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 to 20 tons per 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 (*USFWS and DNRC 2010*).

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. R-1 SES. USDA Forest Service, Northern Region, Missoula MT 60pp.
- MNHP. 2025. Environmental Summary Report for Latitude 48.20745 to 48.43704 and Longitude -115.28319 to -115.47850. Retrieved on 11/11/2025, 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 1. Smoke would be generated from the burning of slash. Slash piles consist of tree limbs, tops, and vegetative debris that would be created throughout harvesting operations. The Montana/Idaho State Airshed Group guidelines would be followed. Due to the infrequent burning that will occur, the impacts are expected to be low.

AQ-2: Dust may be generated from log hauling activities localized to skid trails and haul routes during periods of dry conditions. Due to the temporary use of the roads and skid trails the direct impacts are expected to be low.

Air Quality Mitigations:

- Abide by the state airshed rules and regulations and Montana Department of Environmental Quality.
- The DNRC, would burn on approved days. Thus, direct, secondary, and cumulative effects to air quality due to slash pile burning would be minimal.
- Dust abatement may be required on portions of roads affecting 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	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		
Resources of Land, Water, or Energy														
Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites		X				X				X				A-1
Aesthetics		X				X				X			Y	A-2
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X					

Comments:

A-1: Scoping letters were sent to those Tribes that requested to be notified of DNRC timber sales. No response was returned that identified a specific cultural resource issue. 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 results revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE, but it should be noted that Class III level inventory work has not been conducted there to date.

Because the topographic setting and geology suggest a low to moderate likelihood of the presence of cultural or paleontologic resources, proposed timber harvest activities are expected to have *No Effect to Antiquities*. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, 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.

A-2: The project area, some proposed harvest units and roads would be visible from the open roads listed: Buck Creek Road, and Fisher River Road. The project area is occasionally used by walk-in or bicycle recreational activities. Treatment would open the stands to approximately 22-17 trees per acre or 45-55 foot spacing.

Mitigations:

- 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 year of harvest and this would speed up the recovery of the vegetation that would eventually mitigate the impacts of logging.
- Harvested stands would be planned to be regenerated following harvest.
- New road construction would be grass seeded.

- 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.

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

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					
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		X			X				X				Y	H-2

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		
Agricultural Activities and Production														
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 not aware of any other environmental documents 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 \$260,000.00 - \$390,000.00 based on an estimated harvest of 2-3 Million board feet (13,000 – 19,500 tons @ 6.5 tons / MBF) and an overall stumpage value of \$20.00 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?

No

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

No

Environmental Assessment Checklist Prepared By:

Name: Dave Marsh

Title: Forest Management Supervisor, Libby Unit

Date: December 5, 2025

Finding

Alternative Selected

The action alternative meets the project objectives and is selected for implementation. The no action alternative fails to meet the stated objectives concerning this project.

Significance of Potential Impacts

No significant impacts have been identified to occur as a result of the implementation of the action alternative.

Need for Further Environmental Analysis

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:

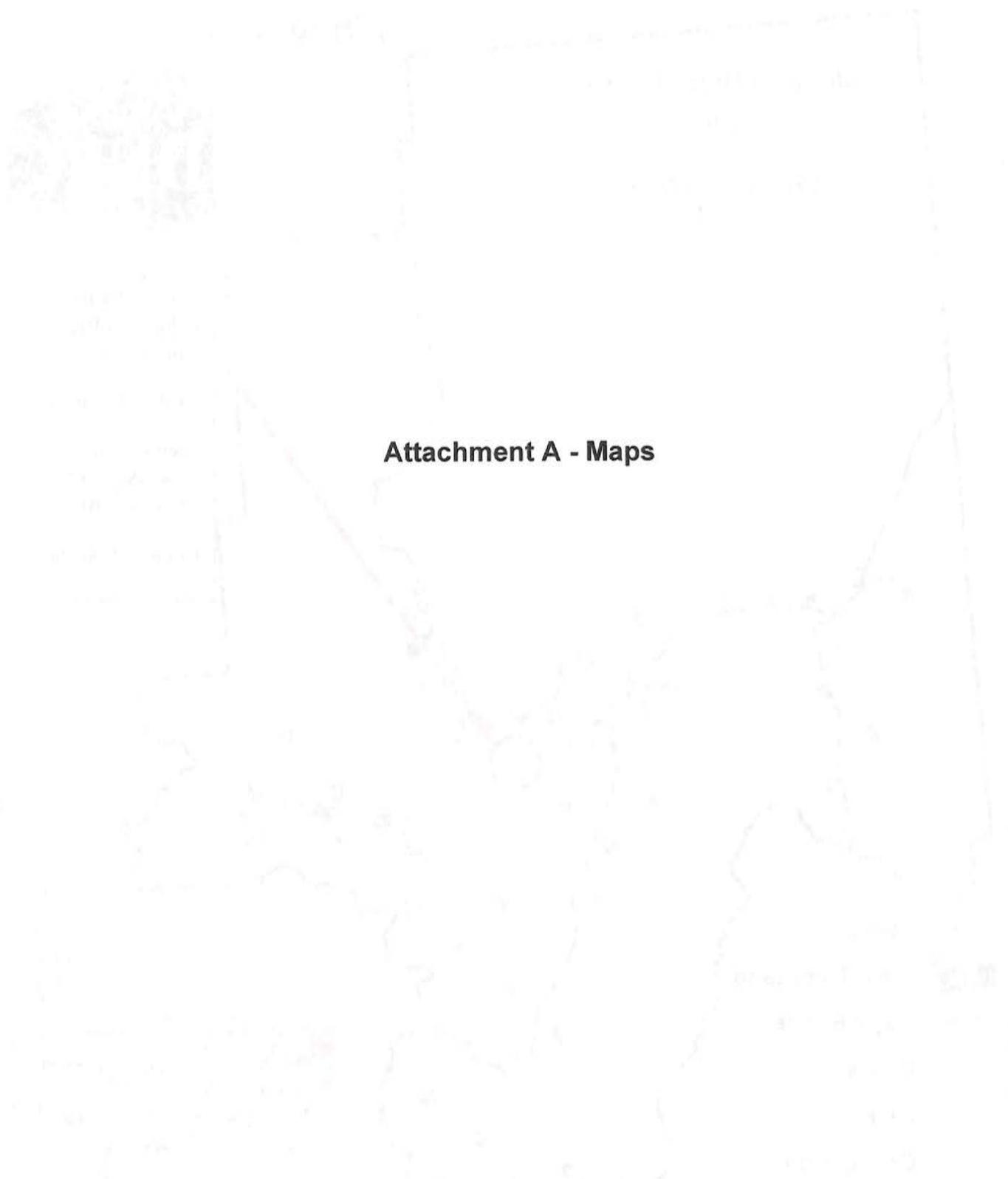
Name: Logan Sandman

Title: Libby Unit Manager

Date: 2/18/26

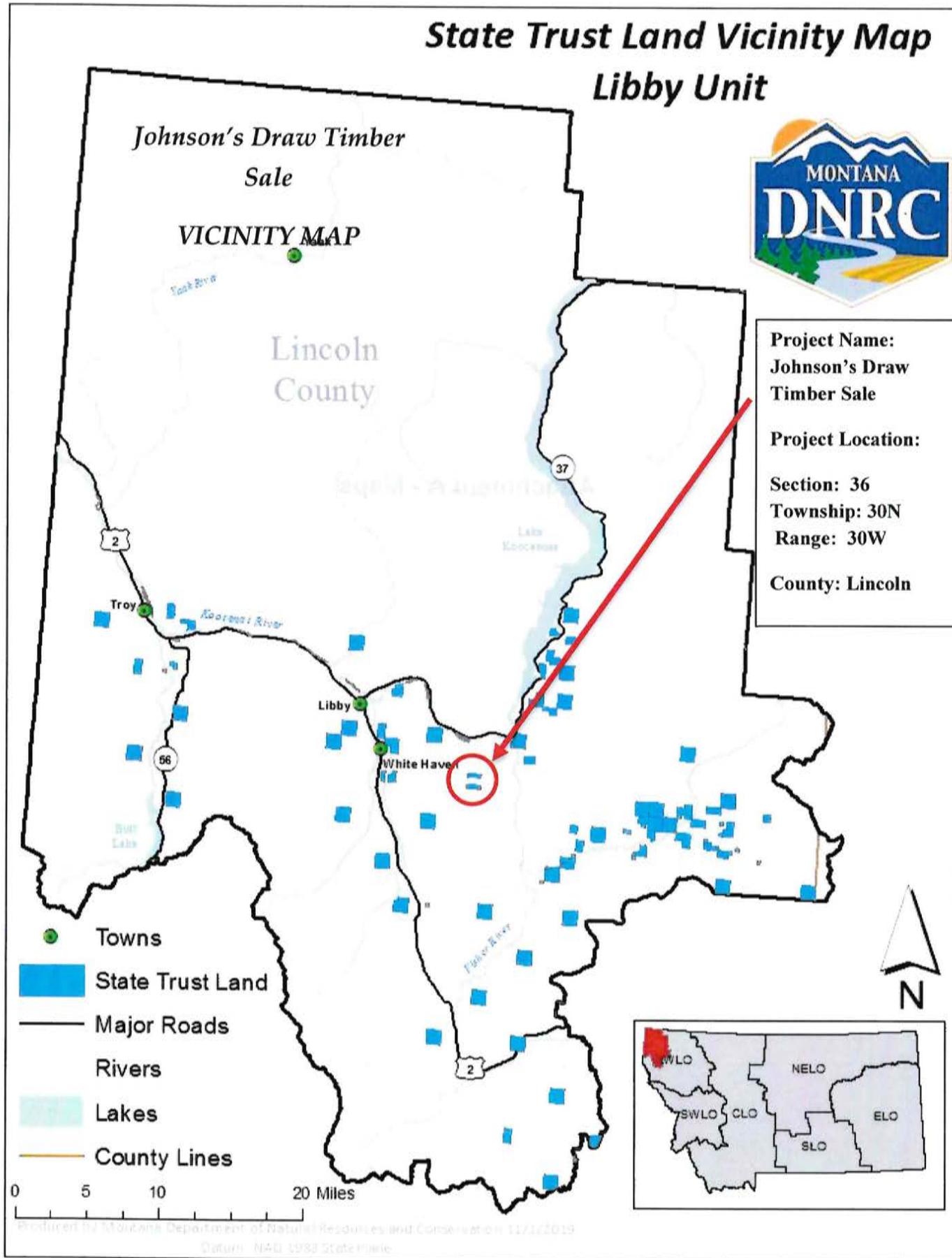
Signature: /s/ Logan Sandman





Attachment A - Maps

A-1: Timber Sale Vicinity Map

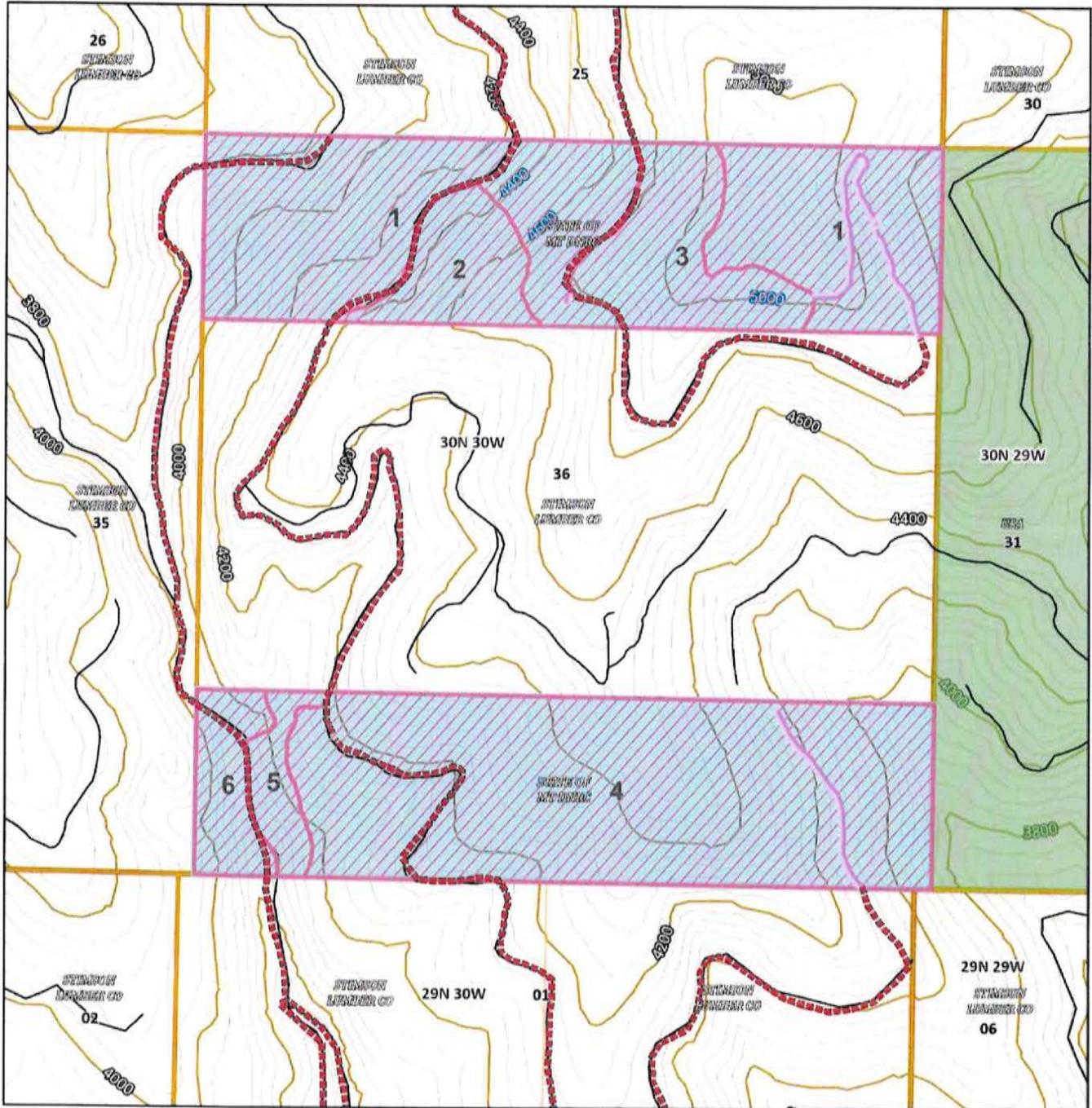


A-2: Timber Sale Harvest Units



Johnson's Draw Timber Sale
Section 36, T30N, R30W

Attachment A



-  New Road Construction
-  Road Maintenance
-  State Trust Land
-  Other Existing Roads
-  Harvest Unit
-  Unit Number



0 0.04 0.09 0.17 Miles




Dave Marsh
11/14/2025

