Environmental Assessment Checklist

Project Name: Klinger Blowdown Salvage Timber Sale
Proposed Implementation Date: July, 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 Klinger Blowdown Salvage Timber Sale. The project is located Approximately 9 Miles South 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	**Section 36, T29N, R31W**	**339.3**	**339.3**
Public Buildings			
MSU 2nd 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:

- Salvage Timber damaged from windstorms during the winter of 2025/2026.
- Generate approximately$92,040.00 for the Common Schools trust.
- Reduce the potential for insects and disease on state trust land and adjacent ownerships resulting from un-salvaged blowdown.
- Reduce hazardous fuels resulting from fallen, dead trees.
- Prepare the site for reforestation of commercial trees through slash piling and scarification.

Proposed activities include:

Action	Quantity
Proposed Harvest Activities	# Acres
Wind damaged timber salvage	339.3
Seed Tree	
Shelterwood	
Selection	
Old Growth Maintenance/Restoration	
Commercial Thinning	
Salvage- Wind Damage	339.3 acres
Total Treatment Acres	
Proposed Forest Improvement Treatment	# Acres
Pre-commercial Thinning	
Site preparation/scarification	**319**
Planting	
Proposed Road Activities	# Miles
New permanent road construction	
New temporary road construction	
Road maintenance	7.5.
Road reconstruction	
Road abandoned	
Road reclaimed	
Other Activities	

Duration of Activities:	Approximately 1 – 2 years
Implementation Period:	July, 2026 – December, 2027

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:
  - May 13, 2026 – May 29, 2026
- PUBLIC SCOPED:
  - The scoping notice was posted on the DNRC Website: https://dnrc.mt.gov/News/scoping-notices
  - Adjacent landowners
  - Statewide scoping list
  - Posted on DNRC website
- AGENCIES SCOPED:
  - Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
  - US Forest Service
  - All Montana Tribal Organizations
  - Lincoln County
- COMMENTS RECEIVED:
  - How many: 0
  - Concerns: 0
  - Results There were no comments received as a result of public scoping.

DNRC specialists were consulted, including: Vitoria Forristal (Wildlife Biologist), Tony Nelson (Hydrologist / Soil Scientist), Pattrick Rennie (Archeologist).

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: Under this alternative, no blowdown timber would be salvage harvested and therefore all revenue associated with these wind damaged trees would be forgone indefinitely. 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. Future salvage logging with considerably less timber volume and value could occur. Firewood gathering, recreational use, fire suppression, noxious-weed control, may also 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. An increase in insects and disease outbreaks affecting state trust land and adjacent property ownerships would be likely to occur.

Action Alternative : A commercial timber salvage harvest of wind damaged trees would take place to remove approximately 1 million board feet of timber. Timber would be harvested using ground-based methods on approximately 268 acres and cable-based logging on the remaining acres. Blowdown salvage harvest treatments would take place across ≈ 339.3 acres to salvage the value of wind-blown trees, promote forest health and increase growth rates of future stands. Commercial timber harvest would reduce the potential for high intensity wildland fire adjacent to private landowners. Road maintenance would be performed on approximately 7.5 miles. Excessive slash would be treated mechanically, and where feasible, through controlled burning. Harvested stands would be re-forested both naturally, and artificially to achieve desired stocking and species composition.

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	Warm and moist (westside)	Mixed-to-Stand Replacing	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	150-199	Western White Pine	Salvage Harvest	50.3
2	Warm and moist (westside)	Mixed-to-Stand Replacing	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	150-199	Western White Pine	Salvage Harvest	50.1
3	Warm and moist (westside)	Mixed-to-Stand Replacing	Lodgepole Pine	100-149	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	Salvage Harvest	121.2
4	Warm and moist (westside)	Mixed-to-Stand Replacing	Western Larch/Douglas Fir	150-199	Western White Pine	Salvage Harvest	97.4

Comments:

Fire Hazard/Fuels: Stands to be treated consist of random, trees fallen or severely damaged from recent wind storms within units that had recently been harvested under a seed tree harvest treatment.

Insects and Diseases: Fir engraver beetle, (Scolytus ventralis) is active in mature Grand fir, and Douglas fir Beetle ((Dendroconus pseudotsuga) is active in mature Douglas-fir. Indian Paint Fungus (Echindomium tinctorium) is evident in the Grand Fir and Western hemlock. White Pine Blister Rust (Cronartium ribicola) is present in the Western White Pine. The Grand Fir is experiencing high infection and mortality across all age classes. The Western White Pine has a lower infection rate and mortality rate that is localized in larger, older trees. Pini (Phellinus pini) is likely present, but not common in certain, random, isolated Western larch trees.

Sensitive/Rare Plants: None identified

Noxious Weeds: Spotted knapweed, orange hawkweed, houndstounge and Bull thistle are present in the project area. Additionally, Ventenata (invasive grass species), has been identified on some roads within the project area.

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			N	
Age Class	X				X				X					
Old Growth	X				X				X					

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

Comments:

A total of 339.3 acres would be salvage harvested. Following successful implementation of the Klinger timber sale in 2025, severe windstorms during the winter of 2025 / 2026 blew down most of the trees left as seed trees (10-12 trees per acre). This blowdown salvage treatment would remove commercial trees (trees completely blown down or leaning so severely that they will soon inevitably fall). Salvage operations would capture the value of these trees before being lost to decay. Additionally, this operation would reduce the threat of severe wildfire to adjacent timber stands within the state ownership as well as adjacent properties. Also, this treatment would reduce the threat of insect and disease outbreaks to state and adjacent properties resulting from the sudden accumulation of stressed trees.

Dead, standing trees and the vertical portion of trees with tops broken off (minimum of two snags per acre and two snag recruitment trees per acre) would be left within harvest units. Harvest methods would include approximately 40 acres of cable-based operations, and approximately 279 acres of tractor-based operations.
Soil scarification of up to 30% would occur from harvest equipment in areas where tractor activity occurs. Additionally, broadcast burning may be considered where cable-based skidding occurs (approximately 40 acres). In areas where planting or competition from grass causes seedling mortality, chemical herbicide may be used to promote tree growth over other vegetation.

Natural regeneration from remaining seed trees would be encouraged. Hand planting tree seedlings would be utilized to promote desired species and stocking levels as needed. Species to be planted would likely include Western White Pine, Ponderosa Pine and Western Larch. The slash hazard would be managed through whole tree skidding to landing piles. In tractor based skidding areas, excess in-woods slash may be machine piled. Approximately 7-14 tons per acre of coarse woody debris would be retained for nutrient recycling. All slash burning would be conducted under controlled conditions. On cable yarding areas, lop and scatter if further slash reduction is needed.

1. Cover types would move towards the desired future condition through proposed harvest, and planned re-forestation.
2. In this mixed severity - stand replacement disturbance regime, age class of treated stands would shift to stand initiation, through proposed harvest and re-forestation, similar to what would be expected through natural processes.
3. Insect and disease threats would be considerably reduced through proposed harvest, hazard reduction, and re-forestation.
4. The threat of catastrophic, stand replacement wildfire would be significantly reduced through proposed harvest, and hazard reduction.
5. Noxious weeds would be managed through contract mitigations, and through ongoing, cooperative efforts.

Vegetation Mitigations:

- Largest diameter snags would be protected to assure retention of 2 snags, and 2 snag recruitment trees per acre in all units.
- All healthy, standing live trees would be retained.
- To minimize noxious weed spread from roads, "off road" logging equipment would be inspected and required to be free of weed parts prior to moving onto the site.

SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:

Soil Disturbance and Productivity Existing Conditions: The proposed project area has approximately 2.9 miles of low to moderate standard existing road. The last timber sale in the project area was completed in 2024. Existing skid trails from prior entries are ameliorating due to root penetration and frost action and impacts from past entries are abating, though still identifiable on the ground. Due to cut slope and fill slope failures, a road in the southeast portion of the proposed project area has delivered road fill material to a class 2 stream during a precipitation event in December of 2025.

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					
Erosion	X				X				X					
Nutrient Cycling	X				X				X					
Slope Stability	X				X				X					
Soil Productivity	X				X				X					
Action														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)		X				X				X			Y	S-1

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		
Erosion		X				X				X			Y	S-2
Nutrient Cycling		X				X				X			Y	S-3
Slope Stability	X				X				X					
Soil Productivity		X				X				X			Y	S-4

Comments:

S-1: Based on DNRC soil monitoring on similar soils with a similar harvest intensity, approximately 11.7% of harvested area may be in an impacted condition (DNRC, 2006). This level is below the range analyzed for in the *EXPECTED FUTURE CONDITIONS* section of the *SFLMP*, and well within the 20-percent impacted area established as a level of concern in the *SFLMP (DNRC 1996)*. This level translates to a low risk of low direct, secondary and cumulative impacts to soil physical disturbance.

S-2: Low impacts to soil erosion are possible due to exposure of bare soil during salvaging and yarding operations. Risk of erosion would be mitigated by implementing all applicable BMPs to harvesting activities.

S-3: Based on research by Graham, et. al. (1994), habitat types found in the project area should have 7-14mm tons/acre of coarse woody debris for nutrient cycling. Logging residue left on the ground as mitigation would have a positive effect on nutrient cycling and improve the project area over the current condition.

S-4: Soil productivity would be impacted by the use of ground-based machinery to yard wind-thrown timber. As stated in comment **S-1**, levels of ground disturbance are expected to be less than 11.7% with roads included, which is well below the range analyzed for in the EXPECTED FUTURE CONDITIONS section of the SFLMP, and well within the 20-percent impacted area established as a level of concern in the SFLMP (DNRC 1996). This level translates to a low risk of low direct, secondary and cumulative impacts to soil productivity.

Soil Mitigations:

- Operate ground-based equipment only during periods of dry, frozen or snow-covered conditions
- Space skid trails a minimum of 60 feet apart to minimize areas impacted by ground-based equipment. Landtypes in the proposed project area are prone to impacts from soil displacement
- Use existing skid trails if they are in suitable locations to minimize potential for cumulative impacts to soil physical disturbance
- Leave approximately 7-14 tons of woody material 3-inches in diameter or greater on the ground for nutrient cycling

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY:
Several small, unnamed tributaries to Libby Creek flow through the proposed project area. These streams are class 2, flowing more than 6 months, but do not contain fish or contribute to another body of water. Overland flow may occur in broad ephemeral draws during extreme runoff events, but no evidence of this was identified.

Water Quality and Quantity Existing Conditions: Past management activities have had no identifiable impacts to runoff patterns or stream channel stability in proposed project area streams and draws.

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			Y	WQ-1
Water Quantity		X				X				X			Y	WQ-2

Comments:

WQ-1: All requirements found in ARM 36.11.301-313, and ARM 36.11.421-427 would be implemented, where applicable. In addition, all applicable forest management BMPs would be implemented. These measures would minimize any potential risk of sediment delivery to a stream or draw and leave a low risk of direct, secondary or cumulative impacts to water quality.

WQ-2: There is a low risk of any proposed activities leading to increases in water quantity sufficient to destabilize any project area stream channel due to the size of the watershed relative to the proposed harvesting, the stable nature of the stream channels within the proposed project area and the well-drained nature of the soils in the project area

Water Quality & Quantity Mitigations:

- Avoid use of ground-based equipment in the bottoms of draws to reduce risk of scour, compaction or routing of surface runoff in draws
- Implement all applicable BMPs and SMZ Law rules to ensure protection of project area streams
- Tree retention requirements of the SMZ Law are met with standing trees in all SMZs, so salvage of wind-thrown trees in the SMZ is allowed
- Do not remove trees that have fallen across a stream since full suspension will not likely be possible on this site

FISHERIES:
Fisheries Existing Conditions: No fish-bearing streams exist within the proposed project area. All stream channels are either class 2 or class 3 and do not connect via surface flow to any downstream waters.

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					
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					

Comments: No fish habitat is located within the proposed project area, therefore no impacts to fish habitat or populations are expected.

WILDLIFE:

Wildlife Existing Conditions: The Project Area consists of a single DNRC-managed parcel totaling 632 acres. The Project Area is comprised of lands included in DNRC's Habitat Conservation Plan (hereafter HCP, USFWS and DNRC 2010). The Project Area was recently harvested during the Klinger Timber Sale (DNRC 2022) with operations concluding in July 2025. During this sale, approximately 306 acres were treated with seed tree prescriptions leaving 10-12 trees per acre plus 2 snags and 2 snag recruits. In December 2025 and again in March 2026, severe wind events caused extensive windthrow in the Project Area and the recently harvested units were heavily impacted. Currently, 1-5 live trees per acre remain in these units and downed woody debris is abundant. The parcel also consists of approximately 137 acres of mature forest stands (trees ≥9" dbh with ≥40% canopy closure) and 189 acres of well-stocked regenerating stands. Windthrow in these areas was minimal and widely scattered. There is no old-growth forest in the Project Area using Green et al. (1992) standards. Tree species diversity is high within the Project Area, ranging from western red cedar to cottonwood to ponderosa pine in various forest types. Landowners adjacent to the Project Area are comprised of USDA Forest

Service (USFS) to the west-southwest and private landowners, which include industrial timberlands and developed areas, to the southeast, east, and north. Approximately 3.4 miles of roads are present within the Project Area, of which 0.5 miles are open, and 2.9 miles are restricted from public motorized use. Restricted roads receive occasional agency motorized use for resource and fire-management purposes. Public non-motorized use is low in this parcel except during the big game hunting season when it may elevate. Cumulative effects analysis areas (hereafter CEAAs) incorporate lands near the Project Area and include a 5,062-acre area for smaller-ranged animals like pileated woodpeckers and a 67,545-acre area for animals that travel across larger areas such as grizzly bears and big game. Impacts from the wind events were widespread and had variable impacts on forest stands throughout the CEAA. Additional information on CEAAs and analysis methods are available upon request.

No-Action Alternative: None of the proposed activities would occur. In the short-term, no changes to the amounts, quality, or spatial arrangement of forested habitat would occur. In the long-term, habitat suitability for species utilizing large, downed wood would increase because blowdown would not be harvested. An increase in wildfire danger, forest insects and disease would also be anticipated due to the current abundance of dead and dying trees. Overall, habitat availability for most species would remain similar to current conditions.

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 *(Ursus arctos)* Habitat: Recovery areas, security from human activity		X				X				X			Y	WI-1
Lynx (*Felis lynx*) Habitat: SF hab.types, dense sapling, old forest, deep snow zone		X				X				X			Y	WI-2
Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) Habitat: high elevation areas that retain high snow levels in late spring	X				X				X					WI-3
Sensitive Species														
Bald eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)* Habitat: Late-successional forest within 1 mile of open water	X				X				X					WI-3

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Black-backed woodpecker *(Picoides arcticus)* Habitat: Mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	X				X				X					WI-3
Common loon *(Gavia immer)* Habitat: Cold mountain lakes, nest in emergent vegetation	X				X				X					WI-3
Fisher *(Martes pennanti)* Habitat: Dense mature to old forest less than 6,000 feet in elevation and riparian		X				X				X			Y	WI-4
Flammulated owl *(Otus flammeolus)* Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest	X				X				X				Y	WI-3
Peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus)* Habitat: Cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	X				X				X					WI-3
Pileated woodpecker *(Dryocopus pileatus)* Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest		X				X			X				Y	WI-5
Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*) Habitat: low elevation ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and riparian forest with diverse roost sites		X				X			X					WI-6

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
including outcrops, caves, mines														
Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) Habitat: coniferous and deciduous forests and roost on foliage in trees, under bark, in snags, bridges		X				X			X				Y	WI-7
Townsend's big-eared bat *(Plecotus townsendii)* Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	X				X				X					WI-3
Big Game Species														
Elk		X				X				X			Y	WI-8
Whitetail deer		X				X				X			Y	WI-8
Moose		X				X				X			Y	WI-8
Mule deer		X				X				X			Y	WI-8
Other														
Red-tailed Hawk		X				X				X			Y	WI-9

Comments:

WI-1. Grizzly Bear – The Project Area is within grizzly bear non-recovery occupied habitat associated with the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem (hereafter CYE; Wittinger 2002, USFWS 1993). Use of the Project Area by grizzly bears is possible; however, the Project Area does not contain preferred bear habitat (e.g. berry patches, riparian areas) and grizzly bears occur in very low densities in the CYE (Kasworm et al. 2020). Hiding cover is currently lacking throughout most of the proposed harvest units due to recent harvest (DNRC 2022) and recent blowdown. Therefore, hiding cover would not be substantially impacted by salvage because only blowdown, excessively leaning, and root-pulled trees would be harvested. The Klinger Timber Sale retained visual screening along the open road and the cutbank adjacent to the open road also reduces sight distances into the harvest unit. However, blowdown created some gaps in the visual screening where large trees fell. Remaing vegetative screening along the open road would be protected to the extent possible during salvage operations. Likewise, blowdown impacted some larger trees in portions of the grizzly bear cover patches that were retained during the Klinger Timber Sale. Smaller trees continue to provide cover, and combined with topographic breaks, sight distances are <600 feet. Blowdown in grizzly bear cover patches would not be removed to prevent further damage to existing cover. Approximately 308 acres (48.7% of the Project Area) of hiding cover would remain in the parcel after salvage is complete. No new roads would be built during the proposed project. The proposed salvage projects would occur in grizzly bear spring habitat; therefore, commercial forest management activity would be prohibited from April 1 – June 15. Harvest during the non-denning season (June 16- November 15) would utilize minor project days and an interruption of parcel's rest status for up to 150 days

(USFWS and DNRC 2010). Therefore, bears may be displaced from Project Area during summer and fall salvage activities. Increased disturbance associated with the Action Alternative would be additive to other motorized disturbance in the vicinity of the Project Area, including any blowdown salvage projects occurring on other ownerships. At the broader spatial scale, the Large CEAA provides abundant hiding cover and measurable changes to grizzly bear use of the CEAA would not be expected as a result of the Action Alternative. The greatest risks to bears within the Large CEAA would continue to be human habitations and associated attractants that bring bears into conflict with people.

WI-2. Canada Lynx – Some downed, root-sprung, and excessively leaning trees would be removed from approximately 32 acres of suitable lynx habitat (10.4% of suitable habitat in Project Area) primarily within SMZs of an unnamed class 2 stream. Removal of these trees would not appreciably alter habitat suitability for general use by lynx. Heavy equipment would not be permitted to operate within the SMZ. However, some young trees in the understory could be impacted by salvage operations and would be protected to the extent possible. Additionally, 7 to 14 tons/acre of coarse woody debris would be retained in accordance with DNRC Forest Management Rules (*ARM 36.11.414*) and retention of downed logs ≥15 inch diameter would be emphasized. Approximately 308 acres in the Project Area would remain suitable lynx habitat (48.7% of Project Area) after the proposed activities are complete. Lynx habitat connectivity within the Project Area would not be altered by the action alternative because only blowdown would be removed. Any lynx that might be using the area could temporarily be displaced from the Project Area for up to 1.5 years, however appreciable use of the area under existing conditions would not be expected due to lack of suitable habitat, nearby developed private lands, lack of any lynx observations within the last 20 years (MNHP 2026), and relatively low snow loads compared to preferred habitat in higher elevations to the west. Disturbance/displacement and habitat alteration by the proposed DNRC activities would be additive to recent or ongoing forest management projects and human development on lands within the larger CEAA.

WI-3. 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-4. Fisher – Some downed, root-sprung, and excessively leaning trees would be removed from approximately 32 acres of suitable lynx habitat (23% of habitat available in the Project Area). Removal of blowdown would not be expected to appreciably alter habitat suitability for general use by fisher. Approximately 139 acres of suitable fisher habitat would remain in the Project Area after the proposed salvage harvest. Riparian areas would continue to provide connectivity to suitable habitat on adjacent USFS lands, however suitable habitat availability is low on adjacent private lands to the north, east, and south. To reduce 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*). Further, coarse woody debris would be retained in accordance with DNRC Forest Management Rules (*ARM 36.11.414*). Fisher observations are lacking in the Large CEAA, however, should any fishers be present within the Large CEAA, habitat alteration and potential disturbance would be additive to any activities occurring or planned on surrounding lands, including blowdown salvage on private lands. The proposed salvage harvest would not have appreciable impacts on the availability of suitable fisher habitat in the Large CEAA.

WI-5. Pileated Woodpecker – The proposed activities would affect approximately 32 acres of suitable pileated woodpecker habitat (28.6% of habitat available in the Project Area). The proposed salvage harvest would not reduce the abundance of mature trees or snags because

only recent downed, excessively leaning, and root pulled trees would be harvested. Existing levels of coarse woody debris would be reduced by the salvage harvest but would be maintained within levels outlined by Graham et al. (1994) and one log >15" diameter and >20 feet long would be retained per acre. At least 2 large snags and 2 large snag recruits (≥21-inch dbh) per acre would be retained. Harvesting could temporarily displace individual woodpeckers in the immediate vicinity of any harvesting activities and disturbance would be additive to forest management projects occurring on adjacent ownerships. Habitat availability within the Small CEAA is limited due to past timber harvesting on surrounding lands, however continued use of the Small CEAA by pileated woodpeckers would be anticipated.

WI-6. Fringed myotis – The Project Area contains some rocky outcrops that could be used by roosting fringed myotis. No known caves or mines are present. Harvesting activities would not generally occur in these areas, however roosting bats (should they be present) could be temporarily disturbed by equipment in proximity to rocky areas. As these sites are not high-congregation areas and disturbance would be temporary, low impacts to fringed myotis would be anticipated.

WI-7. Hoary bat – The proposed activities would affect approximately 334 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.

WI-8. Big Game – The Project Area is considered winter range habitat for white-tailed deer and moose (DFWP 2008), and elk use the parcel at other times of the year. Thermal cover and hiding cover are lacking in the proposed salvage harvest units because these areas were recently logged (DNRC 2022). Further, the proposed activities would only remove downed, root-pulled, and excessively leaning trees which do not appreciably contribute to thermal cover or hiding cover. Young trees would be retained to the extent possible. Disturbance from the salvage activities may temporarily displace some animals. Motorized access to existing restricted roads within the Project Area would remain restricted during and after harvesting. Hiding cover and thermal cover/snow intercept would remain relatively abundant within the Large CEAA. Overall, measurable big game population changes at the scale of the Large CEAA would not be expected resulting from the action alternative.

WI-9. Red-tailed Hawk – An active red-tailed hawk nest was identified within the Project Area in 2026. The nest is in a SMZ that will be part of the salvage harvest. Only blowdown, excessively leaning, or root-pulled trees would be salvaged. Motorized harvest activities within ¼ mile of the nest site would be prohibited from April 1 to August 15 (if the nest is found to be active during breeding season). With these mitigations, the risk of disturbance to breeding red-tailed hawks would be considered low. Habitat changes due to timber harvesting would not be anticipated to affect red-tailed hawks, as raptors display great flexibility in their nest site habitat characteristics.

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).
- Commercial forest management activities (including road building and log hauling) shall be prohibited from April 1-June 15 in all harvest units to provide security to grizzly bears during the spring period.
- Conduct harvest activities in an expedient manner between October 15, 2026, and November 30, 2027, except during the spring period. (ARM 36.11.432(7)).
- Effectively close restricted roads and skid trials 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.
- Within commercial harvest units, retain patches of advanced regeneration of shade-tolerant trees per *ARM 36.11.428(4)(f)*. Care shall be exercised in salvage operations to minimize damage to sub merchantable trees.
- Prohibit motorized forest management activities (including road maintenance, timber hauling, and site preparation) within 1/4 mile of the red-tailed hawk nest location between April 1 and August 15.
- 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 7-14 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. Exceptions are permitted near private land borders where high hazard cleanup is required.

Literature:

DNRC. 2022. Klinger Timber Sale. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Libby Unit, Libby, MT.

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.hub.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.

Kasworm, W. F., T. G. Radandt, J. E. Teisberg, T. Vent, A. Welander, M. Proctor, H. Cooley and J. K. Fortin-Noreus. 2021. Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear recovery area 2020 research and monitoring progress report. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missoula, Montana. 108 pp.

MNHP. 2026. Natural Heritage Map Viewer. Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on May 29, 2026, from https://mtnhp.org/MapViewer/.

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.T. 2002. Grizzly bear distribution outside of recovery zones. Unpublished memorandum on file at U.S. Forest Service, Region 1, Missoula, Montana.

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	1, 2
Dust		X			X				X				Y	3

Comments:

1. The project area is located in Montana Airshed 1 and inside the Libby impact zone. 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 after harvesting operations have been completed

2. 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.

3. 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 regulation Lincoln County has for Air Quality. 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:

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.

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.

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	1
Aesthetics		X				X				X			Y	2
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X					

Comments:

1. 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.

2. Within the project area, most proposed harvest units and roads would be visible from Highway 2, from a location approximately 9-10 miles south of Libby. The project area, most proposed harvest units, and roads are located approximately 0.5 miles from Highway 2 at this location. The project area is used by hunters, hikers and the residents of adjacent landowners. All harvest units would be visible from roads within the project area and from properties near the harvest units. Active forest management is prevalent in this area and is evident on many viewsheds surrounding the Libby area. Within the

project area, blowdown trees resulting from windstorms this past year (Winter 2025 / 2026) have considerably reduced the number of live, standing seed trees in the seed tree harvest units (harvest completed December 2024). Blowdown salvage would reduce the amount of slash and dead fuel in the units and would not noticeably alter the appearance of the landscape beyond what the windstorms affected.

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.*

- DNRC is not aware of any other environmental documents pertaining 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					
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					

Comments:

1. No unusual safety considerations are associated with the proposed project. Because of the relatively small size of the proposed project, and mitigation measures that would be taken, health and safety risks posed by the project would be minimal.
2. A consistent flow of timber contributes towards meeting the current and future demand of these construction materials.

3. Employment in the logging industry is common in the area and this project would in a small part contribute to local employment.

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 zoning or other agency management plans affecting this project 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 $92,040.00 based on an estimated harvest of 882 board feet (4,602 tons) 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
Date: May 15, 2026

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 pertinent environmental laws, DNRC State Forest Land Management Plan, and a consensus of professional opinion on limits of acceptable environmental impact. 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 (SFLMP), I find all the identified resource management concerns have been fully addressed in this Checklist EA and its attachments. The action alternative provides for income to the school trust and promotes the development of a healthy, biologically diverse, and productive forest. 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.

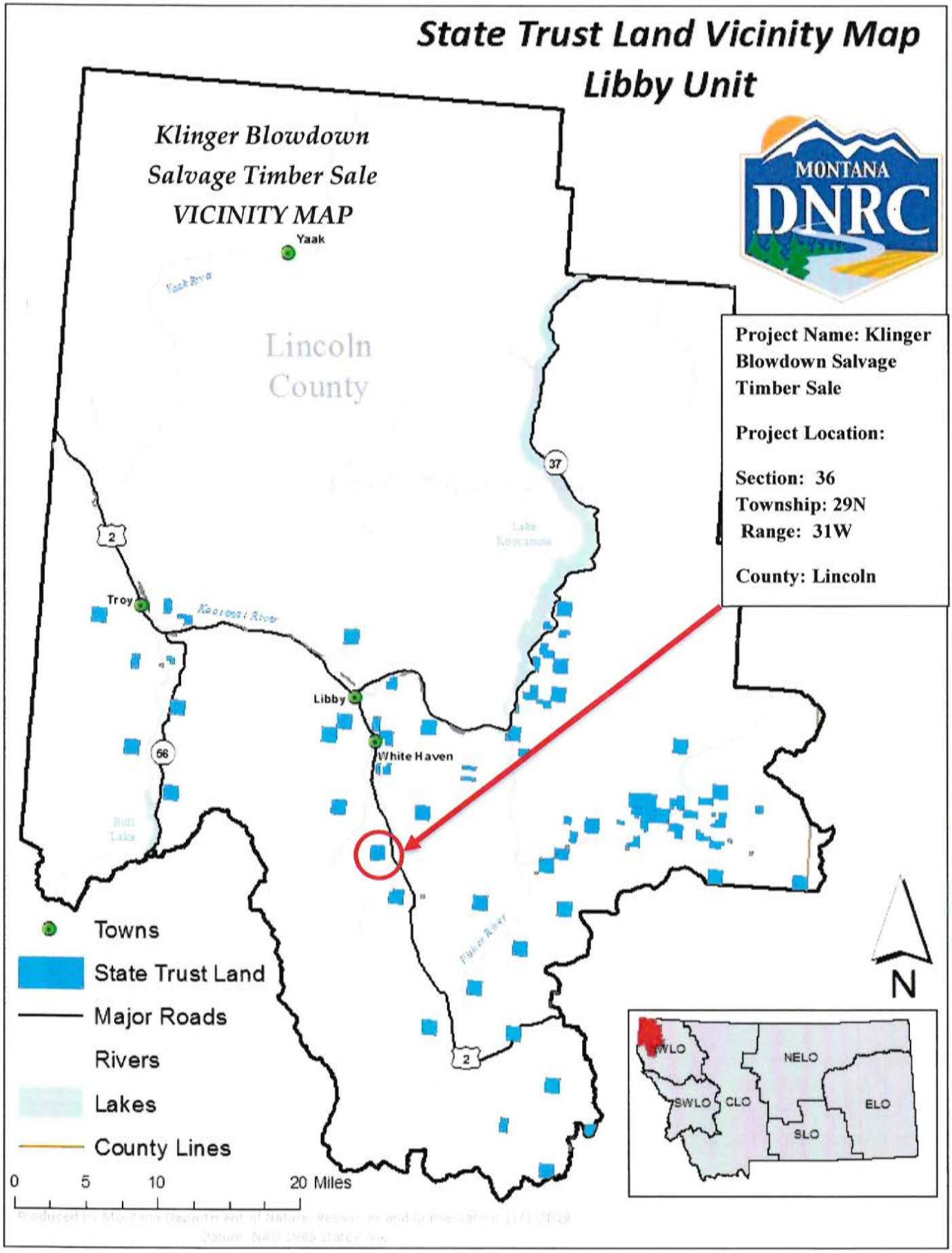
Need for Further Environmental Analysis

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

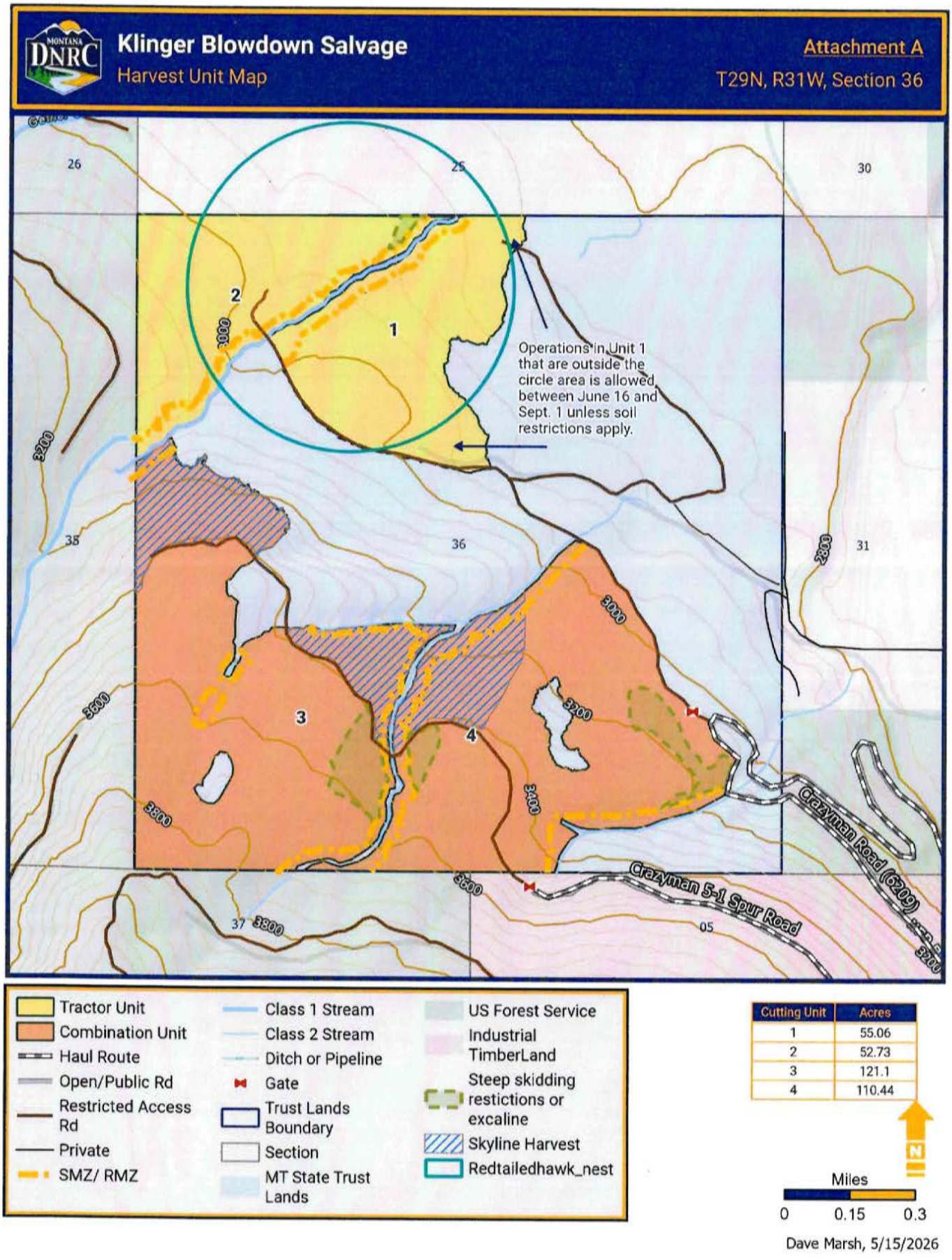
Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:
Name: Logan Sandman
Title: Libby Unit Manager
Date: 7/20/26
Signature: /s/

Attachment A - Maps

A-1: Timber Sale Vicinity Map



A-2: Timber Sale Harvest Units



Cutting Unit	Acres
1	55.06
2	52.73
3	121.1
4	110.44

Dave Marsh, 5/15/2026