

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: MCE Inholding Permit
Proposed
Implementation Date: January 2023
Proponent: Sun Mountain Lumber
Location: T8N, R11W, Section 1
County: Powell

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Sun Mountain is currently operating on the Rancho Deluxe Good Neighbor Authority Timber Sale on Beaverhead Deer Lodge National Forest land. One unit of the sale is immediately adjacent to a 71 acre inholding, owned by the Montana State Prison (see attachment). Sun Mountain is proposing to commercially harvest timber on approximately 66 acres of the inholding.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

No formal scoping for this project was initiated.

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

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

USFS Deer Lodge National Forest – Road Use permit
Montana DEQ – Open Burning Permit

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

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

No Action

No harvest activities would occur within the inholding. Existing uses, which consist of recreation and grazing would still occur.

Action

Approximately 66 acres would be harvested. An existing overgrown road would be opened to access the harvest area. See attached proposal map.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

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

The Project is located on the northeastern flank of the Flint Mountains. Underlying geology is unconsolidated moraine composed of sedimentary rocks (limestone or argillite). The soils are classified as Trapps-Yerka complex on 8 to 25 percent slopes. One small 5 acre portion of the sale area is 45-50% and may not be harvested unless excessive soil disturbance can be avoided or mitigated. Soils are deep, well drained, gravelly loam. Risk from timber harvest and equipment operation is low.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

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

The harvest area is located within an un-named tributary to Willow Creek. No water is present but there is a defined bed and channel. Based on the woody debris in the channel, it appears water does not likely run on an annual basis. Based on these observations, the channel would be classified as a class 3 SMZ and protected as such under Montana Stream Management laws.

6. AIR QUALITY:

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

The project area is located in Airshed 5 and not within or near an impact zone. Under the action alternative, a minor amount of particulate would be generated during slash pile burning. Impacts would be short duration and minor.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

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

The project area is comprised of a mix of Douglas-fir and Lodgepole pine. Nearly all Lodgepole pine have been killed by mountain pine beetle. Most of the trees have blown over and are in various stages of decay. The harvest would remove all Lodgepole pine and selectively thin the Douglas-fir in a manner consistent with the adjacent Rancho Deluxe GNA project.

No rare plants or cover types have been identified.

Direct, indirect and cumulative effects to vegetation would be low.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

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

Primary use of the area is by big game and other smaller non-game animals. The proposed harvest would occur during winter when most animals are not utilizing the area.

Temporary displacement of any animals in the area might occur for a short duration. Overall direct, indirect, and cumulative effects are minor.

No water is present and no impacts to aquatic life would occur under either alternative.

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

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

The project area is not located within critical habitat for threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Primary use is by big game and other small animals. No wetlands are located within the project area.

Direct, indirect or cumulative effects are anticipated with either alternative.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

No sites have been identified thus no effects would be anticipated under either alternative.

11. AESTHETICS:

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

A portion of the proposed area is visible by an open USFS road. While aesthetics is subjective, visuals would soften over time as new trees become established.

Direct, indirect or cumulative effects are not anticipated with either alternative.

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

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

No impacts associated with either alternative.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

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

None

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No impacts associated with either alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

No impacts associated with either alternative.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

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

No impacts associated with either alternative.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

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

No impacts associated with either alternative.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

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

No impacts associated with either alternative.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

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

None

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

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

No impacts associated with either alternative.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

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

No impacts associated with either alternative.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No impacts associated with either alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

No impacts associated with either alternative.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

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

The proposed project would generate approximately \$50,000 in revenue for the Montana Correctional Enterprises to be used at its discretion.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Brian Robbins 	Date: 11/10/2022
	Title: Anaconda Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The action alternative is the selected alternative.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No unacceptable impacts would be anticipated under the selected alternative.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:☐


EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Sierra Farmer
	Title: Trustlands Program Manager
Signature: 	Date: 12/2/2022