

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Blubber Creek R/W

Proposed Implementation Date: 11/1/92

Proponent R-Y Timber, Drawer P, Townsend, MT 59644

Type and Purpose of Action Construct an estimated 4400 feet of permanent road and temporary use of road to access private timber land in Sec. 35-T19N-R8W for harvesting. Close an estimated 4400 feet of existing road that is located in the drainage bottom.

Location: Section 36-T19N-R8W

County: Lewis & Clark

N = Not present or No Impact will occur

Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts)

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	[] Moderately to highly erodible soils fine textured sites and silt loams. Reseeding of cut and fill slopes and installation of drain dips in new construction will stabilize disturbed areas.
2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	[] Blubber creek is a perennial stream running through both private and state lands in this area. This proposal is for new construction well away from stream. No impacts foreseen.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	[N]
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	[] All construction is proposed for either open parks or through fire killed non-merchantable timber stands.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there significant use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	[Y] Area is within grizzly bear management area. See attached write-up.
6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	[] Grizzly bear. See attached write-up.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[] Dori Passmann was contacted by memo on 10-2-92. No on-site review needed based on her reply of 6 October.
8. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	[] Very remote, no aesthetical concerns.
9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	[N] RECEIVED NOV 09 1992
10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	[N] ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N]
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[Y] Other alternatives for accessing the private land would require more miles of road building. See Item 22
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so estimated number	[N]
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N]
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will significant traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	[N]
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N]
17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	[] Scapegoat Wilderness area is located 3 miles southwest of this site but is not readily accessible through this tract.
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N]
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N]
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N]
21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[N]

22. **Alternatives Considered:** 1) No action - in this case R-Y would access the timber with road construction on private land only. Road construction across a steep slope above an intermittent stream would be one option or, approximately 4400 feet of new construction through areas of shallow soils over sloping bedrock (highly erodible sites). 2) Existing road - an old existing road down a gulch bottom just barely loops into state land in NWSW $\frac{1}{4}$. Use of this existing road could cause erosion problems just above Blubber Creek. 3) Proposed action - construct approximately 3200 feet of road on gentler slopes on state land. Install culvert in gulch which old road currently goes up. Close old road (at top).

23. **Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted:** Private landowner and state leasee, Ray Krone, has no objections.

24. **Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed.** County Conservation District will review the proponents plans for crossing Blubber Creek in Section 35 on private land.

25. **Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts.** Potential impacts of the proposed action are small if B.M.P.'s are used during road construction. Cut slopes should be set at a 1:1 slope. Drain dips for road surface drainage should be constructed into the road grade. The ut and fill slopes should be seeded upon construction.

Selecting the proposed action will construct an estimated 4400 feet of new road on state land but close an equal amount of existing road on state and private land. The new road will be suitable for accessing timber on the state tract in the future. Harvest is deferred now due to cover loss resulting from Canyon Creek fire. Adjacent private harvest will occur regardless of granting the license. R-Y would build more road in less desirable locations but entirely on private land to access the timber under contract. I do not believe significant impacts will occur as a result of the road use and construction.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Darrel J. Bakken Title Forester 10/2/92

Approved By: Garry T. Williams Forest and Lands Manager
name title

Garry T. Williams 10/20/92
signature

Blubber Creek Right-of-Way
Sec. 36, T19N, R8W

R-Y Timber has proposed building and using a segment of road on the above listed state section. Two other access alternatives were evaluated. One would build road on private land only. The road would cross a portion of steep slope and an extensive area of shallow soils over sloping bedrock. Erosion potential on this route would be very high. A second alternative would be to re-open an existing road in a gulch bottom. This existing road loops just a short distance into state land. Location of the existing road is poor. Drainage of the existing road is not possible due to its location. The erosion potential would be high and sedimentation to Blubber Creek would be very probable. The proposed action would build new road on state land on gentler, more stable slopes. The proposed road also provides a very suitable take-off point for access to state timberland in Section 36. (Harvest on state land will be deferred at this time.)

The proposed area is within the Northern Rocky Mountain Grizzly Bear recovery area. The Blubber Creek drainage has only one existing road. This road was mostly impassable until it was used as a dozer access during the Canyon Creek fire in 1988. It is currently driveable by ATV, but access is controlled by the Soap Creek Cattle Company.

The Blubber Creek third order drainage covers 2612 total acres (4.08 sq. mi.). Currently, the existing road density is .63 miles/section. Of this none is actually open for public use. The no action alternative would result in a road density of 1.02 mi./sec. Using the poorly located existing road, (with new construction on private land) the road density will be 0.82 mi./sec. The proposed alternative will build on both private and state and yield a road density of approximately 1 mile per section. Of this, only 0.15 mi./sec. results from construction on state land. All roads will still be closed to the public so actual open road equivalent will be less, depending upon which correction factor you use.

Logging on the private land will likely take place regardless of our action on this proposal. By working together with the proponent we can end up with a road which will potentially provide access to state land and minimize erosion potential.

Access to state land is not guaranteed by selection of any of these alternatives. We have had three previous temporary access agreements with the Soap Creek Cattle Company and have had no difficulty negotiating with Ray Krone in the past.

I recommend selection of the proposed alternative and issuance of a land use license for the minimum rate of \$100.00 for 12 months. Special stipulations should include backsloping of cut slopes to 1:1 ratio, installation of drain dips and grass seeding.