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CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

FEB 11 2004

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| Project Name: | East Placid Lake Salvage Timber Permit |
| Proposed Implementation Date: | November, 2003 – October 2004 |
| Proponent: | Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation - Southwest Land Office - Clearwater Unit |
| Location: | Section 23, Township 16 North, Range 15 West |
| County: | Missoula |

LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OFFICE

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D.N.R.C.

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Montana DNRC proposes to harvest approximately 1,072 tons, or 178 thousand board feet (MBF) of sawlogs from approximately 22 acres (see attachment A1 – Vicinity Map) and contribute an estimated \$34,271.84 (based on estimated stumpage price of \$31.97 / ton) to the school trust fund. This harvest would salvage dead and dying, insect infested trees and attempt to improve conditions for residual trees as well as adjacent stands. Approximately 183 feet of new road would be constructed on state owned land and 277 feet on adjacent Plum Creek Timber Company property. Approximately 787 feet of existing road would be re-constructed on Plum Creek Timber Company property and 1,274 feet on state owned land. The total distance of new road construction would be approximately 460 Ft. and the total distance of road re-construction would be approximately 2,134 Ft.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

On July 28, 2003, letters describing the proposed project were mailed to:

Neighboring Land owners: Ken & Joyce Jensen, Duncan & Phylis Cole, Rick McCain, Wildlands LLC, and Plum Creek Timber Co., LP

Other Montana State Agencies: Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Others Consulted: Patrick Rennie (DNRC Archeologist), Mike McGrath (DNRC Biologist), Renee, Hanna (DNRC Hydrologist)

Comments and concerns have been addressed and incorporated in the EA.

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

Montana State Airshed Coordination Group for Hazard Reduction.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: This alternative would postpone any timber harvest and road construction as well as re-construction at this time, but would continue current grazing lease agreement. Potential effects of the "No Action Alternative" include continued loss in timber value as well as continued declining forest health as bark beetle populations continue to expand.

Action Alternative: The proposed action would commercially harvest approximately 1,072 tons, or 178 MBF of timber on approximately 22 acres. This harvest would salvage dead and dying, insect infested trees and

attempt to improve conditions for residual trees as well as adjacent stands. Approximately 183 feet of new road would be constructed on state owned land and 277 feet on adjacent Plum Creek Timber Company property. Approximately 787 feet of existing road would be re-constructed on Plum Creek Timber Company property and 1,274 feet on state owned land. The total distance of new road construction would be approximately 460 Ft. and the total distance of road re-construction would be approximately 2,134 Ft.

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 any cumulative impacts to soils.

No unstable slopes were identified. Some soil related impacts may occur, including compaction and displacement as a result of the proposed action, but the area and degrees of impacts would be limited to less than 15% of the area (on per acre basis) to maintain soil productivity, with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures.

The proposed project is located on low to moderate slopes with a combination of soils consisting of Courville Gravelly Silt Loam 8-30% slopes, Wildgen Winkler, Cool, Gravelly Loams, 15-30% slopes, and Wildgen-Winkler, Cool, Gravelly Loams, 30-60% slopes (see soils map). There are no unusual or unique geological features in the proposed harvest area. There are some old skid trails present in the proposed area, but are stable and well vegetated. Impacts as a result of past management activities are low.

Courville Gravelly Silt Loams and Wildgen-Winkler, Cool Gravelly Loams do have a high compaction hazard under wet conditions. Wildgen and Courville are moderate erosion risk, except for slopes over 40%, which are high. Winkler is low on moderate slopes and moderate on steeper slopes.

To minimize the effects of compaction and erosion, harvest operation will only take place under frozen or snow covered conditions. Ground based equipment would be limited to slopes of 45% or less. Skid trails would be located to avoid skidding down the bottom of draws where runoff is concentrated. However, due the terrain, there is one dry draw that would require skidding down approximately 100 feet of the draw. Leaving a portion of slash would provide shade to enhance survival of seedlings and provide woody debris for nutrient cycling.

Implementation of the recommended mitigation measures would result in low risk of indirect and cumulative effects.

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 cumulative effects to water resources.

Impacts as a result of past management activities are minimal. There were no signs of impacts to water quality as a result of past management activities.

The harvest area is drained by dry draws. There would be no harvest in or near the riparian area of the Clearwater River. There is a wetland located adjacent to the harvest area. All harvest activities will follow the Streamside Management Zone Law and Rules. Adequate buffers, no less than 50 feet would be left to allow for filtration of sediment. As pursuant to rule 36.11.426 of the Forest Management Rules, "for isolated wetlands greater than 0.25 acre the Wetland Management Zone (WMZ) boundary shall be 50 feet".

Approximately 183 Feet. of new road on state ownership and approximately 277 Feet. on PCTC for a total of 460 Ft. would be constructed. A portion of this new road would be constructed adjacent to the wetland. However, a minimum of 50 feet would be required as a buffer between the road and wetland.

The risk of direct, in-direct or cumulative impacts to water quality would be low.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Slash piles will be burned when conditions allow. This is within airshed 3B and all burning will be accomplished after permission is granted from the Montana / Idaho smoke management group.

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 cumulative effects to vegetation.

No rare plants are noted. Knapweed is present on existing roads and is expected to increase in the area. Disturbed soils would be planted with site-adapted grass to compete with weeds. The site will be monitored for weeds and if new infestations of weeds associated with the proposed action alternative are identified, a treatment plan will be developed.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

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

There are no fish bearing streams located in the project area.

Big Game—Elk and white-tailed deer may use the project area. However, due to the proximity of the road to Placid Lake and Highway 83, the proposed action would not reduce the amount of security cover (i.e., hiding cover >0.5 mile from an open road) in the area. It would, however, reduce the amount of thermal cover for white-tailed deer winter range by approximately 22 acres. After completion of the Seeley Lake Salvage I and II projects, there would be approximately 905 acres of thermal cover between Seeley and Salmon Lakes. The proposed action would further reduce this amount by approximately 2.5% of the thermal cover's total area. Given that the proposed action would have a cumulative effect in reducing the amount of thermal cover available for white-tailed deer, the effects would be minimal. There would also be low risk of direct and indirect effects to white-tailed deer and elk because the road construction associated with the proposed action would be located behind a locked gate upon completion of the project.

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 cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Bald Eagle—An active bald eagle nest is located approximately 1.4 miles SE of the project area. As such, the project area is located within the nest site's 2.5 mile radius foraging area. Within a bald eagle foraging area, the Bald Eagle Management plan (MBEWG 1994) has the maintenance of water quality as an objective. The proposed action would not harvest in or near the riparian area of the Clearwater River, and adequate buffers would be left to allow for sediment filtration. Thus, there would be low risk of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to bald eagles as a result of the proposed action.

Grizzly Bear—Grizzly bears are known to utilize the nearby Clearwater River riparian zone as well as adjacent habitats. Within a 1,062 square mile analysis area that surrounds the project area, there are approximately 1,368 miles of open road and 3,400 miles of total road (open or closed), for a road densities of 1.29 miles of open road per square mile (simple linear calculation), and 3.2 miles of total road per square mile (simple linear

calculation). The proposed action would build or re-construct approximately 0.48 mile of road and harvest 180 MBF of timber on approximately 22 acres. Because of the project area's proximity to the Clearwater River, the project area may receive occasional use by grizzly bears. Thus, retention of visual screening cover and minimizing open roads would be an important part of this proposal. Under the proposed action, there would be approximately 0.18 mile of cover (lodgepole pine and dense willow thickets) between the proposed harvest unit and the Clearwater River. Additionally, a locked gate would be installed on the road to the proposed harvest unit. Thus, there would be low risk of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to grizzly bears as a result of the proposed action due to: (1) the small number of acres involved in the proposed harvest; (2) installation of a locked gate to minimize open road densities; and (3) the amount of effective visual screening cover left between the proposed harvest unit and the Clearwater River.

Gray Wolf—A wolf pack's activity center is located approximately 7 miles SE of the project area, with members of the pack known to venture northward during winter (Mike Thompson, MT FWP, personal communication, 2003). Wolves could be most directly affected through increases in open road densities and reductions in big game cover. The proposed action would not increase open road densities (see discussion under Grizzly Bear), and would largely harvest insect-killed timber, with removal of some live tree canopies on only 22 acres. Thus, there would be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wolves as a result of the proposed action.

Lynx—Within a 2-mile radius of the proposed action, there are approximately 180 acres of preferred habitat types and approximately 541 acres of secondary habitat types for lynx on School Trust and USFS land. Many of these acres are mature forest, but are sparsely scattered among the 8,881 acre analysis area. The proposed action would harvest insect-killed, and some live, timber within an approximately 22-acre area. Included within the proposed harvest unit would be a 7.6 acre stand of Douglas-fir/twin flower habitat type (secondary lynx habitat), with the nearest patch of preferred habitat 1 mile NW of the affected patch. The proposed action would enable the affected patch to regenerate and provide early foraging habitat within the time frame of 15 to 30 years post-harvest. Thus, there would be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to lynx as a result of the proposed action.

Peregrine Falcon—The nearest known peregrine falcon ayrie is located approximately 20 miles NW of the project area. Additionally, there are no cliff-faces with potential nest sites for peregrine falcons within a 1-mile radius of the project area. Thus, there would be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to peregrine falcons as a result of the proposed action.

Pileated Woodpecker—Within a 1-mile radius of the project area, there are approximately 448 acres of predominately ponderosa pine or western larch forest with an average dbh \geq 16 inches, and 1,469 acres of forest with an average dbh \geq 16 in. Of the proposed 22 acre harvest unit, approximately 2.9 acres have an average dbh of 22 inches, and 60% of the stand is ponderosa pine. Thus, while the proposed action would be reducing the amount of potential pileated woodpecker habitat by approximately 2.9 acres, through removal of bug-killed or infected trees, and favoring retention of ponderosa pine and western larch, there would be abundant habitat within a 1-mile radius. Thus, there would be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to pileated woodpeckers as a result of the proposed action.

Black-backed woodpecker—When recently burned habitat is not present, black-backed woodpeckers will inhabit stands experiencing insect infestations. During the summer of 2003, approximately 4,200 acres of forestland burned in the Boles Meadow fire, 9 miles west of the project area. As such, the most suitable habitat would be located within the area burned in 2003. Thus, there would be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to black-backed woodpeckers as a result of the proposed action.

Flammulated Owl—Within a 1-mile radius of the project area, there are approximately 1,656 acres of flammulated owl preferred habitat types on School Trust lands, with 1/3 of those acres contained within the affected parcel. The acres proposed for harvest are all considered to be flammulated owl preferred habitat types. However, due to the high stocking within the proposed harvest unit, those acres are likely too dense to be of high suitability for nesting by flammulated owls. The proposed action would harvest all lodgepole pine, and thin the remaining stand, while favoring ponderosa pine and western larch for retention. Such action would open the stand and promote growth of understory shrubs. Combined with the proximity to the Clearwater River riparian zone, insect production (i.e., prey for flammulated owls) would be enhanced post-harvest. Thus, there

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 cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The project area is located on and within common topographical features typical to the area. Low elevation and slightly concave topography covering the project area would significantly limit visibility from highway 83 (approximately ¼ mile to the east of the project area). No excessive noise, light or cumulative impacts are anticipated to occur as a result of the action 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 cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The project area will not use resources that are limited in the area. No other activities nearby are expected to be affected by the project. No cumulative impacts are likely to occur as a result of the proposed action

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 NEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

This state owned tract is under grazing lease 3062987 by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. No other studies, plans or projects are known to exist on this tract. Montana DNRC's Seeley Salvage Timber Sale was considered during project development.

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

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Potential human safety risks may vary with those individuals actively involved with "on-site" harvest operations. Different types of tools, machinery and style of operations have the most influence on human safety risks. Safety rules and regulations apply through the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and are administered by workers of that program.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

This proposal is expected to increase forestland productivity.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

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

People are currently employed in the wood products industry in the region. Due to the relatively small size of the timber sale program, there will be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on employment.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

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

People are currently paying taxes from the wood products industry in the region. Due to the relatively small size of the timber sale program, there will be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on tax revenues.

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 cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There will be no measurable cumulative impacts related to demand for government services due to the relatively small size of the timber sale program, the short-term impacts to traffic, the small possibility of a few people temporarily relocating to the area, and the lack of other timber sales in the adjacent area.

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.

In June 1996, DNRC began a phased-in implementation of the State Forest Land Management Plan (Plan). The management direction provided in the Plan comprises the framework within which specific project planning and activities take place. The Plan philosophy and appropriate Resource Management Standards have been incorporated into the design of the proposed action.

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 cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

No wilderness or recreational areas are nearby or accessed through this tract. Hunting and hiking does occur on this tract, but is limited to walk-in only. Stands that are harvested under the action alternative would increase visibility to hunters until such time as stands are well regenerated.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

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

There will be no measurable cumulative impacts related to population and housing due to relatively small size of the timber sale program, and the fact that people are already employed in this occupation in the region.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No disruption to native or traditional lifestyles or communities is expected.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

No unique quality of the area would be affected by the proposed action 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 cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The estimated return to the trust is \$34,271.84. 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 very similar species, quality, average diameter, product mix, terrain, date of sale, distance from mills, road building and logging systems, term of the sale or anything that could affect a buyer's willingness to pay for stumpage. Under the action alternative, an estimated 1,072 tons, or 178 MBF (thousand board feet) of timber will be harvested yielding \$34,271.84 to the school trust fund.

Potential, future uses of this tract other than existing management may include cabin site lease development assuming access for the associated purpose through Plum Creek property is obtained.

No cumulative economic or social affects are likely to occur as a result of the action alternative.

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| EA Checklist Prepared By: | Name: Dave Marsh | Date: 11-25-03 |
| | Title: Management Forester | |

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

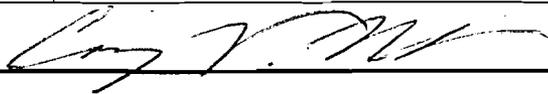
Action Alternative – will meet project objectives and requirements of the Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management and Streamside Management Zones. All mitigation measures described in the EA will be incorporated into the action alternative.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Potential impacts have been adequately addressed in the EA. There will be no significant impacts to the human environment as a result of implementing the Action Alternative.

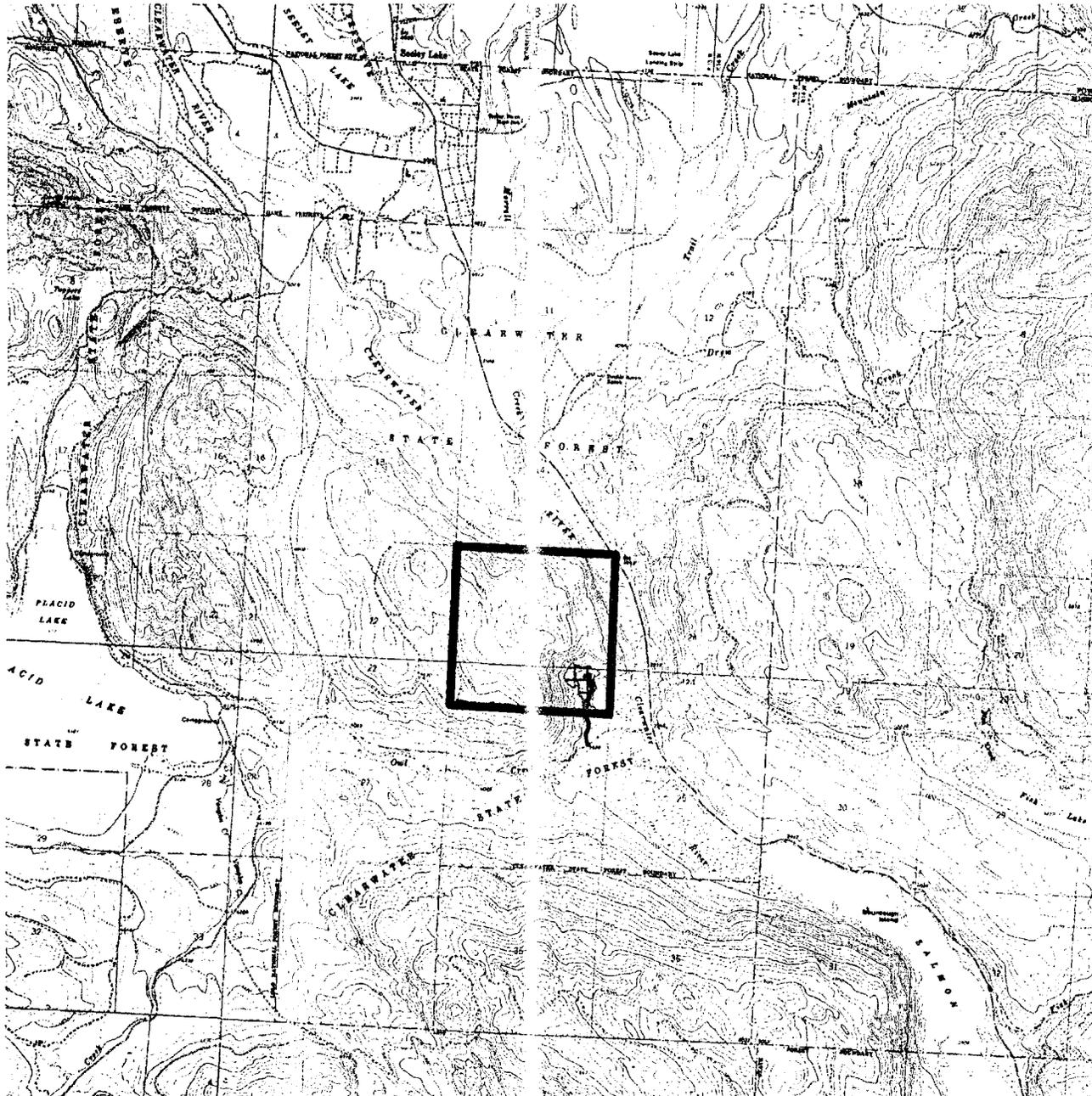
27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS
 More Detailed EA
 No Further Analysis

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| EA Checklist Approved By: | Name: Craig V. Nelson | Date: 11-25-03 |
| | Title: Supervisory Forester | |
| Signature: |  | |

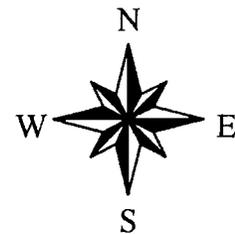
East Placid Lake Salvage Timber Sale (Vicinity) Attachment - B

Section 23, Township 16N, Range 15W



Legend

— Project Area



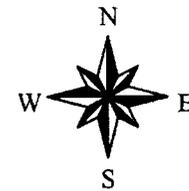
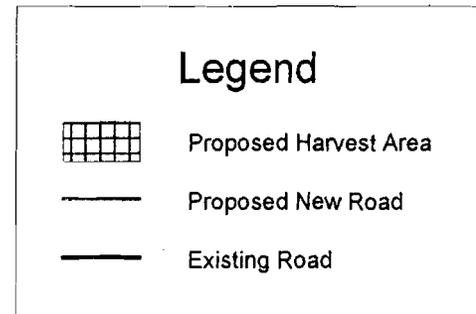
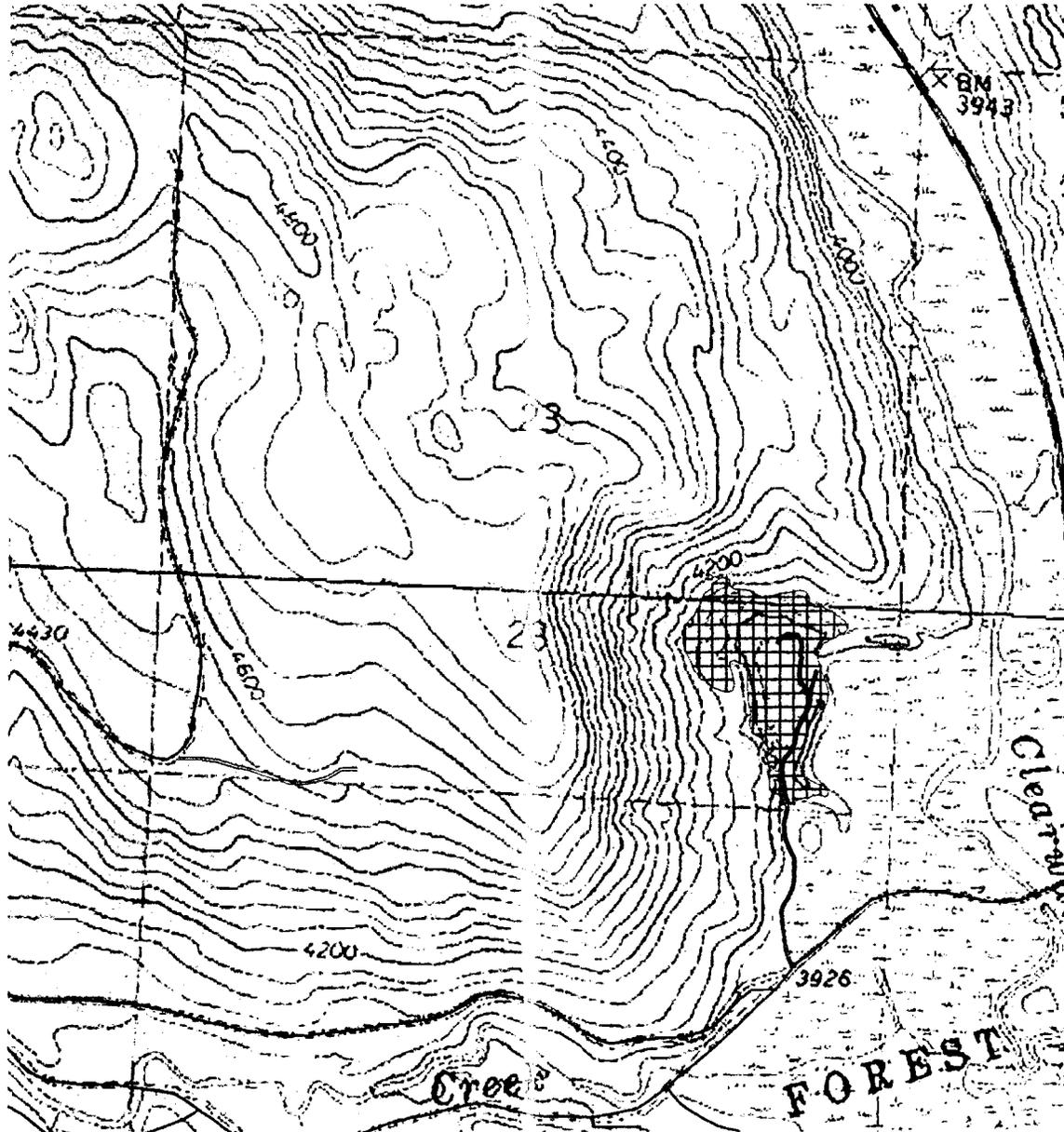
1000 0 10000 20000 Feet



East Placid Lake Salvage Timber Sale

(Initial Proposal)

Section 23, Township 16N, Range 15W



3000 0 3000 6000 Feet

