

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Plains Unit Pre-commercial Thinning
Proposed Implementation Date:	March 1, 2010 through December 31, 2013
Proponent:	Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, Plains Unit
Location:	All DNRC State Trust Lands in Sanders County, Montana.
County:	Sanders

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Plains Unit of the Montana DNRC proposes pre-commercial thinning stands of overstocked regeneration. This thinning would reduce overstocking of natural regeneration, increasing stand health, growth potential, and aiding in long term forest improvement and future timber value. The thinning will incorporate all requirements of the State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP), Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management, and Best Management Practices for Forestry (BMP).

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Public scoping for this project was accomplished by Request for Comment published in the Clark Fork Valley Press and Sanders County Ledger between 2/24/2010 and 3/9/2010. Internal scoping and specialist review would take place on a case by case basis as stands are identified for thinning.

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

None identified.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action – Pre-commercially thin stands as described in Section 1, Type and Purpose of Action.

No action – No thinning would occur and overstocked stands would continue to develop at slow rates with reduced health and low vigor.

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.

Impacts would be addressed by specialist review on a case by case basis.

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 would be addressed by specialist review on a case by case basis.

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.

Some localized exhaust would be produced by use of thinning equipment, primarily chainsaws. Most projects would occur in Class 2 air sheds; however some projects may take place in the Thompson Falls impact area. No cumulative impacts to air quality would occur.

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.

Changes to the vegetative community from the proposed action would be: a reduction in overstocking of tree regeneration to a level more favorable to individual tree growth and stand health. Impacts to any identified rare or sensitive plants or vegetative communities would be addressed by specialist review on a case by case basis.

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.

Impacts would be addressed by specialist review on a case by case basis.

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.

Impacts would be addressed by specialist review on a case by case basis.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

No effects to historical archaeological or paleontological resources are likely to occur. In the case of any artifacts being discovered before or during thinning, operations would be suspended to investigate and secure the site.

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.

No cumulative effects to aesthetics would occur. Thinned stands would resemble adjacent stands. There may be a temporary localized noise increase associated with use of thinning equipment.

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.

No limited resources would be required by the project. No other activities nearby would be affected by the project. No cumulative effects to the environmental resources would occur.

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.

Various Plains Unit Timber Sale Environmental Analyses. Impacts would be addressed by specialist review on a case by case basis.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<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>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

None identified beyond standard safety risks associated with thinning operations.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

No impacts would occur.

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.

This project will add some additional work and income to the local work force. Due to the small scale of the proposed action, no cumulative effects to the employment market will result.

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 this area. Due to the relatively small size of the thinning program, there will be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on tax revenue.

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

Short term changes may include a small, localized increase in traffic, and a few people temporarily relocated to the area. Due to the small scale of the project no cumulative effects to demand for government services would result from the proposed action.

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 (SFLMP). 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.

This project will not influence the recreation potential. There are no wilderness areas within the project area area.

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 thinning 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.

Native communities or lifestyles will not be disturbed.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Cultural uniqueness will not be disturbed.

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 action alternative would improve tree individual health and vigor, and increase growth in the regenerating stand; providing for increased timber value and future revenues for the associated trust grant.

The no action alternative would provide no identified benefits to the associated trust grant.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Kyle Johnson	Date: February 26, 2010
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V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED: The Action Alternative is selected for implementation

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS: No significant impacts have been identified as a result of implementing the Action Alternative.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Larry Ballantyne
	Title: Plains Unit Manager
Signature: /s/ <i>Larry Ballantyne</i>	
Date: March 2, 2010	