

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Libby Unit Western White Pine Pruning
Proposed Implementation Date:	April, 2010 – April, 2012
Proponent:	Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, Libby Unit
Location:	All DNRC State Trust Lands in Southern Lincoln County managed by Libby Unit
County:	Lincoln

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Hand pruning Western White pine trees in young tree stands that have been regenerated from past timber sales, This pruning would incorporate all requirements of the State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP) and Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management. The purpose of the pruning is to promote forest health through helping prevent lethal infection of White Pine Blister Rust. This checklist environmental assessment will cover western white pine pruning for the next two years.

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 public scoping was done for this project. In the past, Libby Unit has never had any comment on this type of project, such as pre-commercial thinning.

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.

None foreseen.

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 – Current land management activities would continue, while certain young tree stands that have been regenerated from past timber sales, would continue to develop with higher rates of mortality in western white pine trees, due to white pine blister rust. Lesser amounts of revenue to the various trusts could be experienced as a result of fewer Western white pine trees reaching their potential, commercial size.

Action – Hand prune Western White pine trees in young tree stands that have been regenerated from past timber sales. Treated stands would develop with more Western white pine trees reaching their potential commercial size. A greater amount of revenue to the various trusts could be experienced as a result.

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.

Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP) would be incorporated. Pickup truck, or other highway vehicles would be used on existing roads to access the stands and hand tools, including chainsaws used for hand pruning.

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.

Forestry BMPs would be incorporated into the contracts. The Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management; Watershed Management and watershed RMS would be implemented.

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.

No impacts 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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

To assure protection of sensitive plant species, the Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management; Biodiversity and Silviculture as well as RMS for Sensitive Species would be implemented.

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.

Terrestrial, Avian and Aquatic Habitats would be maintained through The Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management; Big Game, Fisheries and applying Biodiversity RMS; Big Game Species RMS; and Sensitive Species RMS would be implemented.

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.

Threatened or endangered species may migrate through the area. The Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management; Watershed Management, Threatened and Endangered Species and Sensitive Species and SFLMP guidance for Grizzly Bear, Wolf, Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle management would be implemented where appropriate. Fisheries RMS would be implemented.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

These sections have been reviewed for archaeological evidence and have been cleared for operations. If evidence of artifacts is discovered before or during pruning, operations may 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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Significant topographic features, terrain or aesthetic values would not be changed by this pruning. There would be a temporary noise increase associated with a standard pruning operation.

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 limited resources would be used from the project. There are no other activities nearby that would affect the project.

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.

Libby Pre-commercial Thinning Checklist Environmental Assessment (September 15, 2009 through September 15, 2011). Cumulative impacts would not be expected to occur.

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.

Normal health risks associated with a standard pruning operation.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

This project would add some additional work and income to the local work force.

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.

Income tax revenue from the pruning contracts would increase slightly. Due to the relatively small size of the pruning program, there would be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on tax revenue. Property taxes would not change.

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

There would be no measurable cumulative impacts related to demand for government services due to the relatively small size of the pruning program.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

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

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.

There would be no measurable cumulative impacts related to population and housing due to the relatively small size of the pruning 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 would not be disturbed.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Cultural uniqueness would 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 direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

There are no other unique social or economical qualities in this area.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Dave Marsh	Date: 4-12-10
	Title: Forest Management Supervisor	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The Action Alternative is selected.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant impacts are expected. All projects are being conducted on sites previously reviewed through the timber sale planning process and all current resource management standards will be applied.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Steve Frye
	Title: Area Operations Manager
Signature: /s/ Steve Frye	Date: 4/16/10