

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION FOR DNRC FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Project Name: RRL Fuels Reduction Timber Permit

Proposed Implementation Date: November 2010

Proponent: Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation

Type and Purpose of Action: Commercial salvage harvest of an estimated 100 thousand board feet of sawtimber and hazardous fuels reduction on dead/dying timber and overcrowded sub-merchantable material that have been affected by insect and disease infestations. The proposed treatment would utilize conventional/tractor logging and remove the majority of the stand understory while salvaging sawtimber material from ~15 acres. Treatment would focus primarily on removing dead, dying and overcrowded trees. The proposed project would utilize existing roads with activities occurring on frozen and/or snow covered ground and would be scheduled for winter of 2010/11. Purpose of action is to work with adjacent landowners by providing hazardous fuels reduction within the project area, recover value from damaged timber while providing revenue to the school trust and improve the health and productivity of the forest stand through removal of dead, dying and overstocked trees.

Location: N2NE4 Section 36, Township 14 South, Range 2 West

County: Beaverhead

Category (refer to ARM 36.11.447 for additional detail):

- 1) Temporary Uses of Land with Negligible Effects
- 2) Plans and Policies
- 3) Leases and Licenses
- 4) Acquisition of Land or Interest in Land
- 5) Road Maintenance and Repair
- 6) Bridges and Culverts
- 7) Crossing Class 3 Streams
- 8) Temporary Road Use Permits
- 9) Road Closure
- 10) Material Stockpiles
- 11) Backfilling
- 12) Gathering Forest Products for Personal Use
- 13) Regeneration
- 14) Nursery Operations
- 15) Water Wells
- 16) Herbicides and Pesticides
- 17) Other Hazardous Materials
- 18) Fences
- 19) Waterlines
- 20) Removal of Small Trees
- 21) Removal of Hazardous Trees
- 22) Cone Collection
- 23) Timber Harvest (<100 MBF green or 500 MBF salvage)

By process of the adoption of the Administrative Rules for Forest Management on February 27, 2003, pursuant to ARM 36.2.523(5)(a), the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Trust Land Management Division, has adopted the above categorical exclusions for activities conducted on state forest lands. "Categorical Exclusion" refers to a type of action that does not individually, collectively, or cumulatively require an EA or EIS unless extraordinary circumstances occur (ARM 36.2.522(5)).

Extraordinary Circumstances:

Will the proposed action affect one or more of the following resources or situations in the project area? If the resource or situation is present, but project design avoids potential adverse effects on the resource, the answer is "no". One "Yes" answer indicates that Categorical Exclusion is not appropriate for the project, and an EA or EIS must be conducted.

YES	NO	
_____	<u> X </u>	1) Sites with high erosion risk.
_____	<u> X </u>	2) Federally listed threatened and endangered species or critical habitat for threatened and endangered species as designated by the USFWS.
_____	<u> X </u>	3) Municipal watersheds.
_____	<u> X </u>	4) The SMZ of fish bearing streams or lakes, except for modification or replacement of bridges, culverts and other crossing structures.
_____	<u> X </u>	5) State natural area.
_____	<u> X </u>	6) Native American religious and cultural sites.
_____	<u> X </u>	7) Archaeological sites.
_____	<u> X </u>	8) Historic properties and areas.
_____	<u> X </u>	9) Several related projects that individually may be subject to categorical exclusion but that may occur at the same time or in the same geographic area. Such related actions may be subject to environmental review even if they are not individually subject to review.
_____	<u> X </u>	10) Violations of any applicable state or federal laws or regulations.

The project listed above meets the definition of the indicated categorical exclusion, including specified conditions and extraordinary circumstances, as provided in the Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.447).

Prepared by: Chuck Barone (Name) November 16, 2010 (Date)

Decision by: Tim Egan (Name) Dillon Unit Manager (Title)

/S/ Timothy Egan
(Signature)

November 16, 2010
(Date)

ATTACHMENT E

Vegetative Analysis/Stand Prescription RRL Fuels Reduction Timber Permit

The State parcel is located in the northern Centennial Mountains along the forest/grassland/urban interface and is bordered by the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge to the north, the US Sheep Experiment Station to the south and the Centennial Mountains Wilderness Study Area to the east and west. Slopes range from 5-65% with an elevation range of 6800 to 7600 feet. The State parcel has ~575 forested acres. The NE¼ was lightly harvested in the early 1900's and in the 1940's. These harvested acres have regenerated with sub-alpine stock.

Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine dominate most seral stands and sub-alpine fir and spruce are minor stand components with Subalpine fir/Pinegrass (Abla/Caru) as the dominant habitat type. Douglas-fir is indicated as a climax species and cover type on the drier slopes with Douglas-fir/Pine Grass (Psme/Caru) as the habitat type.

The cover type is lodgepole pine and the majority of forested stands are included in fire group eight where periodic low to moderate severity wildfires swept through the stands often enough to set back any significant invasion of sub-alpine fir or spruce. The Douglas-fir climax areas are included in fire group six.

Stand Prescriptions:

Treatments for lodgepole pine cover types would target all dead, dying and at-risk lodgepole pine and other shade intolerant species exhibiting signs of insect/disease, poor health and/or poor tree form characteristics for removal and overall stand density reduction, utilizing regeneration harvests. Trees of all age classes exhibiting signs of insect/disease, poor health and/or poor tree form characteristics would be designated for harvest. Older, large shade tolerant trees would be harvested to cull out defective or damaged trees, where applicable. Younger, smaller diameter shade tolerant trees exhibiting good health and form would be protected, where applicable. Large live trees, live cull trees, snags, cull snags, and coarse woody debris and fine materials would be protected and retained in sufficient quantities where applicable.

The majority of the sub-merchantable trees and understory would be removed to reduce ladder fuels and facilitate an overall reduction in the forest fuel loadings.

Severity of stand conditions would dictate harvest method used, emulating low to moderately severe ground fire. Harvest prescription would recover value from resources before it is lost, reduce overstocking, fire hazard, and additional insect and disease while promoting forest health, vigor and productivity. Additionally, harvest would open the stands to encourage natural regeneration of shade intolerant species; maintain a lodgepole pine cover type while maintaining a semblance of historic stand conditions; and promote existing aspen stands.

Aspen Areas - A regeneration harvest of all conifer sawtimber within 50-75 feet of the aspen clone would be used to reduce conifer encroachment into aspen stands and promote aspen regeneration. Submerchantable conifer and aspen would not be protected during harvest operations to further reduce conifer encroachment and induce suckering of aspen. Post harvest treatment to fall and lop any remaining submerchantable conifer trees.

Excess slash would be consolidated at landings and burned. Natural regeneration would be expected. Two sensitive plant species, James Stichwort and Simple Kobresia, have been noted by the Montana Natural Heritage Program to occur within the proposed project area.

Harvest Unit 1 (15.4 ac - 100 MBF) - Stands are composed of a mix of Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine with minor components of sub-alpine fir and spruce sawtimber. The stands have Mountain Pine Beetle, Douglas-fir Bark Beetle and Spruce budworm. Understory is overcrowded with sub-alpine fir and spruce seedlings/saplings. Majority of trees have poor crown ratios (10-30%). Dominate trees are 80-90' and

co-dominates are 60-70' with an age range of 140-250 years. Yield capacity is 50-60 cu. ft/acre/year. Regeneration and understory vegetation is moderate to heavy with moderate coarse woody debris.

A regeneration harvest would remove all merchantable lodgepole pine material and all conifers within 50-75' of aspen colonies for aspen restoration. One large snag or snag recruit (≥ 21 " dbh) per acre would be left where available. Retain all fine litter and 5-10 tons/acre of large woody debris >3 " diameter as feasible. Consolidate remaining slash at landings for burning. Conduct regeneration survey in 5-7 years and a thinning survey in 15 years after harvest.

There is currently more total forest cover in Beaverhead County than in prior historical conditions. Harvesting an estimated 100 MBF sawtimber would alter the forest cover on approximately 15 acres. Harvest design is intended to maintain a semblance of historic conditions while promoting forest health and productivity by removing dead and dying sawtimber and reducing the overcrowded understory through the emulation of mixed severity fires.

MEASURES RECOMMENDED TO MITIGATE POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

- 1) Compliance with Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP's), Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) laws and applicable DNRC Forest Management Administrative Rules.
- 2) Limit equipment operations to periods when soils are dry (less than 20% soil moisture), frozen or snow covered (12 inches packed or 18 inches unconsolidated) to minimize soil compaction, rutting, vegetative disturbance and maintain drainage features. Control erosion by installing adequate drainage on roads and skid trails.
- 3) The Forest Officer shall approve a plan for felling, yarding and landing location in each harvest unit prior to the start of operations in the unit. The locations and spacing of skid trails and landings shall be designated and approved by the Forest Officer prior to operations and skid trails will not be spaced less than 60 feet. Retain all fine litter as feasible and 5-10 tons/acre of large woody debris >3 " diameter. Minimize soil disturbance by general skid trail planning and limit sustained tractor skidding to slopes $\leq 45\%$. Limit scarification to 30-40% of the harvest area. Slash would be left in the harvest units where feasible, and distributed on skid trails upon completion of use, for nutrient cycling, to control erosion and to provide shade and protection for seedlings.
- 4) Install adequate road drainage to control erosion concurrent with harvest activities. Provide effective sediment filtration along drainage features near crossing sites. Major skid trails on State lands would be closed with slash and debris and/or barriers, and adequate drainage provided.
- 5) All road and logging equipment would be power washed and inspected prior to being brought on site. Sale area would be monitored for weeds following harvest and a treatment plan would be developed should noxious weeds occur.
- 6) At sale closure, grass seed roads, skid trails (where needed) and landings with an appropriate seed mixture.
- 7) One snag and one snag recruit per acre, of the largest diameter class, would be retained where applicable. Cull live trees and cull snags would be retained where applicable.
- 8) Retain live, healthy older trees and stand attributes suitable for old growth development where available and applicable.
- 9) Contact DNRC wildlife biologist should any threatened or endangered species be encountered within the proposed project area.

**ATTACHMENT E
RRL FUELS REDUCTION TIMBER PERMIT**

CHECKLIST FOR ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND SENSITIVE SPEICES
Pertains to Section II. 9. of the DS-252 DNRC Environmental Checklist
CENTRAL LAND OFFICE

Prepared by Chuck Barone

October 25, 2010

<p>Threatened and Endangered Species</p>	<p>[Y/N] Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures N = Not Present or No Impact is Likely to Occur Y = Impacts May Occur (Explain Below)</p>
<p>Grizzly Bear (<i>Ursus arctos</i>) Habitat: recovery areas, security from human activity</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project area is situated approximately 5 miles west of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. In recent years, grizzly bears have been documented ranging greater distances outside of the Yellowstone Ecosystem. Grizzly bears have occasionally been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project area and the proposed project area lies within a zone considered as occupied habitat (Interagency Occupied Habitat Map, September 2002). As such, the lands in the general vicinity of Red Rocks Lakes were identified as those where one would reasonably expect to find grizzly bear use occurring during most years. DNRC is not aware of any specific observations of grizzly bears associated with the proposed project area; however, periodic or transient use is possible. Riparian habitats preferred by bears do occur within the proposed project area. The wet draws support relatively moderate levels of hiding cover and human access levels are presently moderate. Present hiding cover is composed predominately of Douglas-fir and spruce within the proposed Treatment area and ranges from low to moderate due to the more open nature of these stands. Heavier cover is found in stands where Douglas-fir is not well represented. The value of habitat contained in the proposed project area overall is moderate for grizzly bears. No new road would be constructed; and any skid trails developed to accomplish Treatment objectives would be closed with slash and debris. Proposed project activities would occur on frozen and/or snow covered ground and not during the spring period. Harvest and road activities would be short-term in nature. Should contractors camp on site during project activities, food and garbage would be contained in a bear resistant manner (i.e., in a vehicle, hard sided camper or building, etc.). The potential for any measurable increases in bear-human conflicts following the project activities are expected to be low. Adverse direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to bears</p>

	<p>as a result of this project are expected to be minimal.</p>
<p>Lynx (<i>Felis lynx</i>) Habitat: mosaics--dense sapling and old forest >5,000 ft. elev.</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project area is located within preferred lynx habitat. The majority of the habitat found within the State parcel would be categorized as "other" (300 ac), mature foraging (242 ac) and denning (30 ac). There is no young foraging habitat within the State parcel. Of the ~571 acres of potential lynx habitat (other, mature foraging and denning) on the State parcel, ~8.2 acres of "other" habitat and ~11.5 acres of mature foraging are proposed for harvest. This would convert ~19.7 of these acres to temporary non-habitat. Areas relatively high in coarse woody debris abundance found in subalpine fir habitat types preferred by lynx do occur within the proposed project area. Potential for denning is moderate due to the suitable lynx foraging habitat within the proposed project area. Dense sapling stands and dense mature forest containing abundant forest cover at the ground level are present within the proposed project area. Preferred lynx habitat is moderate within the proposed project area due to the desirable habitat conditions for lynx and their primary prey, snowshoe hares. Due to the small size and short duration of the project and availability of desirable habitat present on adjacent lands, adverse direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to lynx as a result of this project are expected to be minimal.</p>
<p>Gray Wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>) Habitat: ample big game pops., security from human activity</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project area falls within the Yellowstone Nonessential Experimental Area for gray wolves. The nearest packs are the Horn Mtn. pack in Montana and the Bishop Mtn. pack in Idaho. Individuals from these packs or transients from other packs could occasionally use portions of the proposed project area; however, due to the size, nature, duration and location of the proposed project, activities associated with this proposal are not expected to effect wolves or recovery efforts. Should a new den be located within one mile of the proposed project area, activities would cease and a DNRC Biologist would be contacted immediately. Mitigations would then be developed and implemented to minimize adverse impacts to wolves prior to initiating any activity.</p>

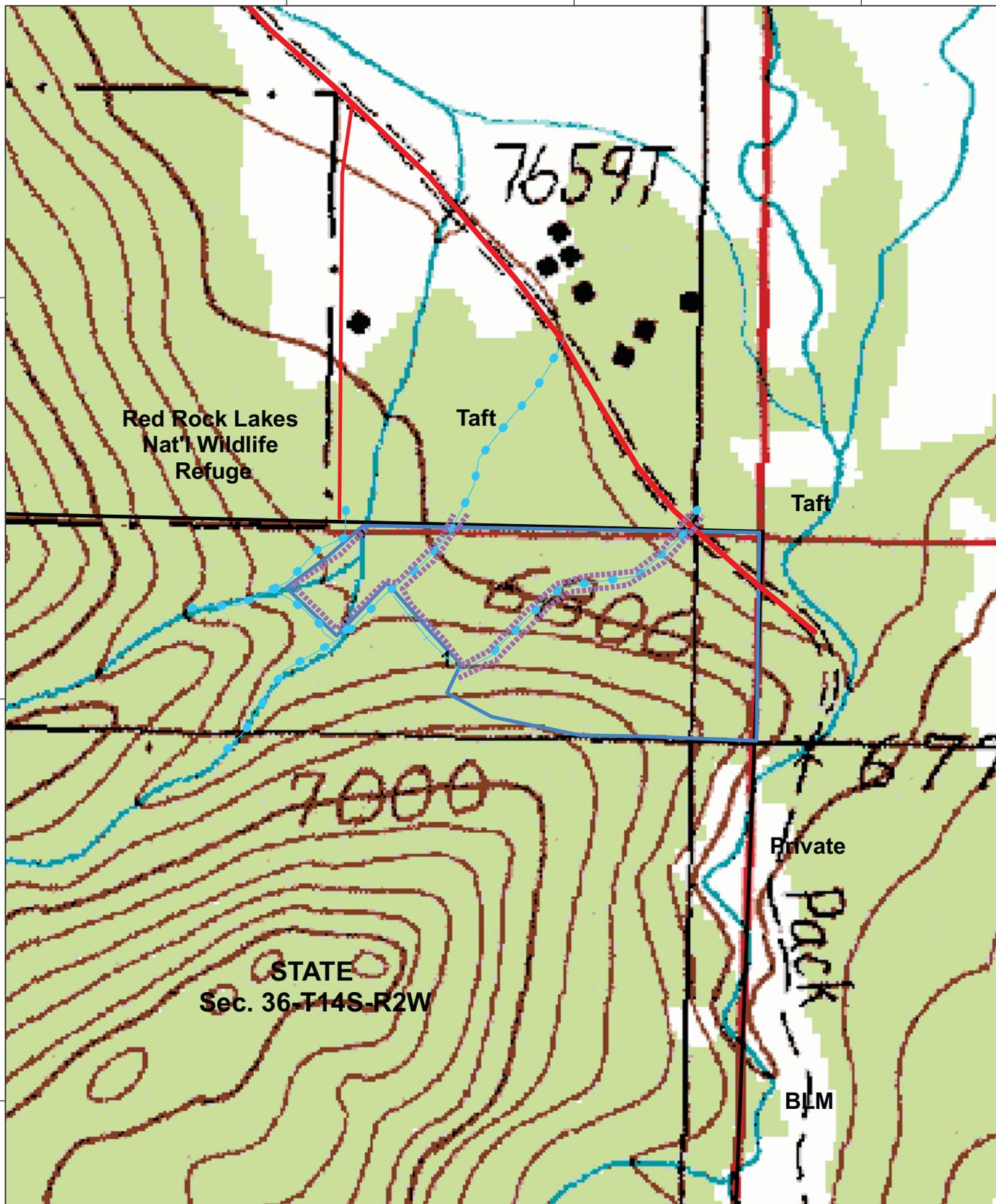
<p align="center">DNRC Sensitive Species</p>	<p>[Y/N] Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures N = Not Present or No Impact is Likely to Occur Y = Impacts May Occur (Explain Below)</p>
<p>Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) Habitat: late-successional forest <1 mile from open water</p>	<p>[N] Bald Eagles have been documented within the quarter latilong (L47A) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). Nesting habitat does occur within one mile of the proposed project area, and the project area occurs within bald eagle nesting home range. No direct, indirect or cumulative effects to bald eagles associated with this project are anticipated.</p>
<p>Black-Backed Woodpecker (<i>Picoides arcticus</i>) Habitat: mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest</p>	<p>[Y] Black-backed woodpeckers have not been documented within the quarter latilong (L47A) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). However, stands found within the proposed project area are presently experiencing insect activity and could attract birds. No recent burns (≤ 5 years old) have occurred within the State tracts or adjoining sections. Due to the small size, location and short duration of this proposed project only minor potential for direct, indirect or cumulative effects to black-backed woodpeckers would be expected to occur.</p>
<p>Black-tailed Prairie Dog (<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>) Habitat: grasslands, short-grass prairie, sagebrush semi-desert</p>	<p>[N] Grassland habitats suitable for use by black-tailed prairie dogs do not occur within one mile of the proposed project area. Impacts to black-tailed prairie dogs are not anticipated.</p>
<p>Flammulated Owl (<i>Otus flammeolus</i>) Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest</p>	<p>[N] Flammulated owls have not been documented within the quarter latilong (L47A) that the proposed project area lies within (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). The parcel involved in the proposed project maintains an elevation of 6800-7400 feet. Flammulated Owls have been found in warm, dry Douglas-fir cover types. The parcels involved in this project have similar vegetative conditions but the associated higher elevations are not their preferred habitat. Direct, indirect and cumulative effects to Flammulated Owls would not be expected to occur under the alternatives considered.</p>
<p>Sage Grouse (<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>) Habitat: sagebrush semi-desert</p>	<p>[N] Sage Grouse have been documented in the quarter latilong (L47A) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). Sagebrush semi-desert habitats suitable for use by Sage Grouse do occur within one mile of the project area. The area surrounding the proposed project has been identified as a core and lek area. No leks have been identified within one mile of the project area. A lek has been identified near the haul route along the county road segment. Should sage grouse be present in the vicinity of the project area, any effects to habitat or disturbance-related effects would be expected to be minimal, due to the late start-up date of</p>

	activities (i.e., post June 15), and preferred sagebrush habitat would not be altered. Impacts to Sage Grouse are not anticipated.
Harlequin Duck (<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>) Habitat: white-water streams, boulder and cobble substrates	[N] Harlequin ducks have been documented in the quarter latilong (L47A) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). High gradient streams suitable for use by harlequins do occur within the project area. No impacts to harlequin ducks would be expected to occur as a result of this project.
Mountain Plover (<i>Charadrius montanus</i>) Habitat: short-grass prairie, alkaline flats, prairie dog towns	[N] Mountain Plovers have not been documented in the quarter latilong (L47A) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). No short-grass prairie or prairie dog towns occur on, or within one mile of the proposed project area. No impacts to mountain plovers are expected as a result of this project.
Northern Bog Lemming (<i>Synaptomys borealis</i>) Habitat: sphagnum meadows, bogs, fens with thick moss mats	[N] No sphagnum meadows or bogs occur in the proposed project area. Thus, no impacts to bog lemmings would be expected to occur as a result of this project.
Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) Habitat: cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	[N] Peregrine Falcons have been documented within the quarter latilong (L47A) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). Cliff features suitable for use by nesting peregrine falcons may occur within 1 mile of the project area. No direct, indirect or cumulative effects associated with this project are anticipated.
Pileated Woodpecker (<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>) Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest	[N] Pileated woodpeckers have not been documented within the quarter latilong (L47A) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). The project area is poorly suited for use by pileated woodpeckers. Due to the small size, location and short duration of this proposed project and as suitable habitat is not present in the project area; no impacts to pileated woodpeckers would be expected to occur as a result of this project.
Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (<i>Plecotus townsendii</i>) Habitat: caves, caverns, old mines	[N] The DNRC is unaware of any mines or caves within the proposed project area or close vicinity that would be suitable for use by Townsend's big-eared bats. Impacts to Townsend's big-eared bats are not anticipated as a result of this project.

*Skaar, P.D. 1996. Montana bird distribution, fifth edition. Montana National Heritage Program 2010. National Heritage Tracker.

ATTACHMENT A
RRL Fuels Reduction Project
Sec. 36-T14S-R2W, Beaverhead County

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1:5,000

- Access Road
- Stream
- Treatment Area
- SMZ Area

