

## CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION FOR DNRC FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Project Name: Fox Trot Salvage Timber Permit

Proposed Implementation Date: July 2011

Proponent: Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation

Type and Purpose of Action: Commercial harvest of an estimated 100 MBF of Douglas-fir sawtimber from approximately 17 acres on Common School Trust lands. The proposed project would address timber that is suppressed and has been affected by insect and disease infestations, removing dead, dying, susceptible and overstocked trees. The project would incorporate group selection, selection and seed tree harvest methods utilizing conventional/tractor harvest systems. The project would utilize existing roads and construct approximately 625 feet of temporary, minimum standard new road to access the harvest unit. The new road on would be physically closed at the end of the project. Purpose of action is to generate revenue for the Common School Trust; remove overstocked and suppressed timber before its value is lost to insect and disease or wildfire; and improve the health, vigor and productivity of the forest in the proposed project area.

Location: Section 26, Township 4 South, Range 15 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).

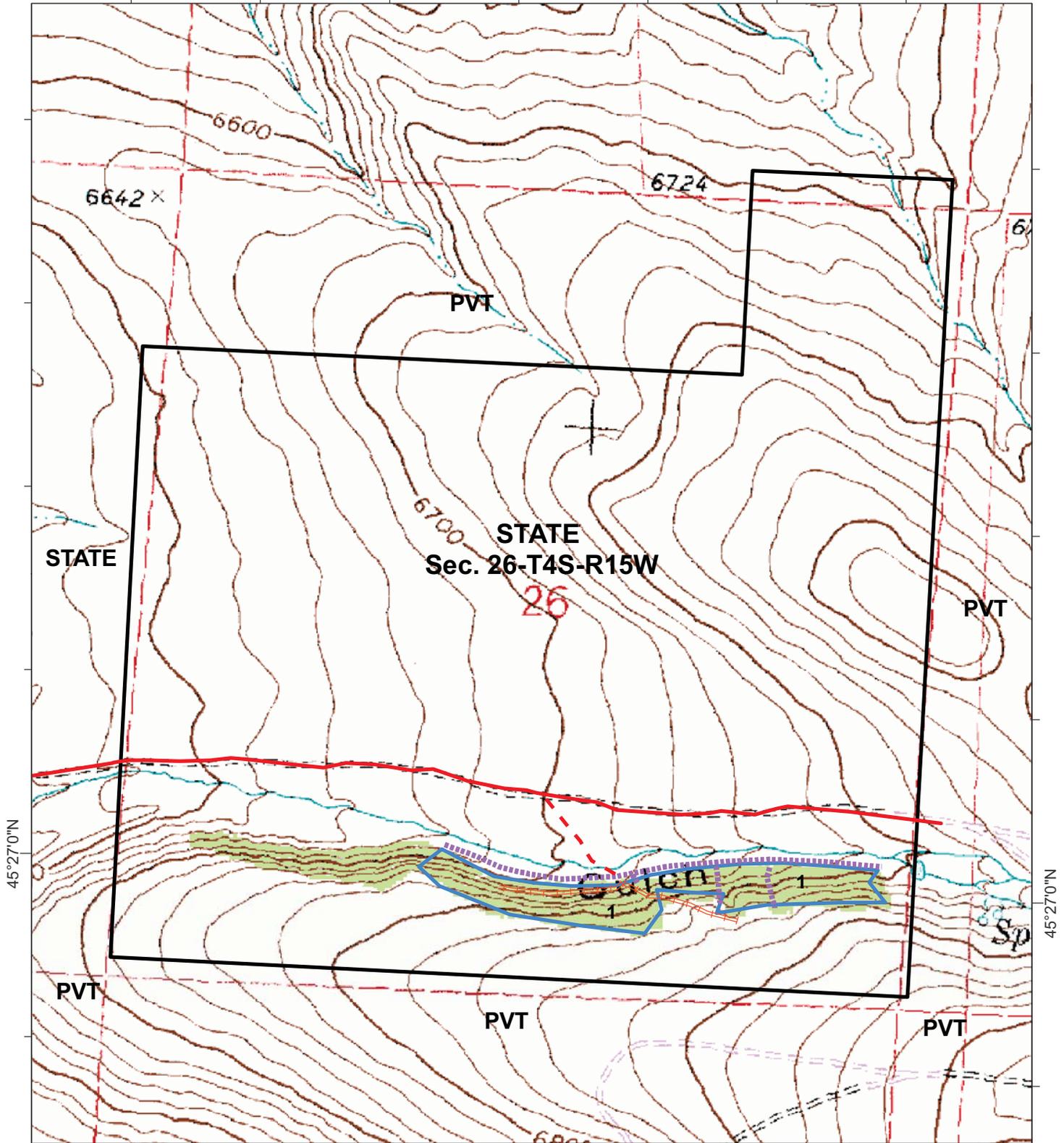
Prepared by: Chuck Barone (Name) 12/30/10 (Date)

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

/S/ Tim Egan (Signature) 12/30/2010 (Date)

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**Fox Trot Salvage Timber Permit**  
**Sec. 26-T4S-R15W, Beaverhead County**

113°25'0"W



45°27'0"N

45°27'0"N

113°25'0"W



1:11,000

- - - - New Road
- Access Road
- - - - - Designated Skid Trail
- . . . . . SMZ
- ⬭ Harvest Area



## ATTACHMENT B

### Vegetative Analysis/Stand Prescription Fox Trot Salvage Timber Permit

The State parcel is located on the edge of the west Pioneer Mountains within the grassland interface. Slopes range from 10-55% with an elevation range of 6600-6900 feet. No harvesting has occurred within the Fox Gulch watershed. The State parcel has ~26 forested acres which are dominated by Douglas-fir found on north facing slopes with some lodgepole and limber pine found in the west end of the stand. The cover type is Douglas-fir and the habitat type is Douglas-fir/Elk Sedge (Psmc/Cage). Forested stands are included in fire group five with Douglas-fir the climax species and a vigorous seral with lodgepole and limber pine as accidental individuals or minor seral species. The fire disturbance regime was likely low severity fires occurring at a 35 to 40 year interval, maintaining a more mature stand in a fairly open condition with stand replacing fires occurring in denser, overstocked areas. The absence of fire, in combination with encroachment, has resulted in overstocked and suppressed stands. These conditions make the stands more susceptible to fire and attack from insects and disease.

#### Stand Prescription:

The majority of the unhealthy trees are in the older age classes and would be targeted for harvest while the younger age classes would be favored for the residual stand. 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. Submerchantable trees and shrubs would be protected and retained for visual screening.

Severity of stand conditions would dictate harvest method used, emulating moderate to severe ground fire. Harvest prescription would reduce overstocking and suppression, fire hazard, and susceptibility to additional insect and disease; recover value from timber affected by insect/disease; open the stands to encourage natural regeneration of shade intolerant species; maintain Douglas-fir cover type while bringing the stands back to a more historic open, park like condition; and promote existing aspen stands.

Unit 1 (16.8 ac/100 MBF) - Stand is composed predominately of a mix of DF small to medium sawtimber. No true old growth areas are found in the stand but scattered individuals and small clumps (<2 acres) of old relic Douglas-fir trees do occur within the proposed unit. These older trees exhibit large fire scars and most likely have some kind of trunk rot. Historically, these remnants were typically naturally fragmented, open-park like communities maintained by frequent low intensity fires. Overall health and growth of the stand is poor in the older tree component and poor to fair in the younger tree component. The stand is overstocked and suppressed and has spruce budworm damage in the upper crowns and pockets of Douglas-fir bark beetle. Majority of trees have poor crown ratios (<30%) and those with slightly better crowns are rounded or flattened. Dominate trees are 60-65' and co-dominates are 50-55' with an age range of 100-200 years. Yield capacity is 35-45 cu. ft/acre. Regeneration and understory vegetation is negligible due to livestock use. Coarse woody debris is minimal.

Trees of all age classes exhibiting signs of insect/disease, poor health and/or poor tree form characteristics would be designated for harvest. A group selection/selection/seed tree harvest removing 55-75% of the merchantable sawtimber volume would be used to reduce over stocking and suppression, fire hazard, and insect and disease. Stand density reduction would be concentrated in areas containing younger-aged/small to medium sized trees while retaining some of the healthy older trees. Desirable dominate/co-dominate trees would be left for seed source where available along with the large, old relic trees, and the remaining sawtimber to be removed. One large snag or snag recruit ( $\geq 21$ " dbh) per acre would be left where available. Due to areas of un-operable ground and sub-merchantable timber, islands of unharvested timber would be scattered throughout the stand.

A regeneration harvest would be utilized within 50-75' of aspen colonies to reduce conifer encroachment and promote restoration of the aspen stands. 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.

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 7-9 years and a thinning survey in 20-25 years.

There is currently more total forest cover in Beaverhead County than in prior historical conditions. The proposed harvest represents 69% of the total forested acres within the State parcel and 1.2% of the total forested acres within the Fox Gulch watershed. Harvesting an estimated 100 MBF of timber would alter the forest cover on approximately 16.8 acres. Harvest design is intended to maintain a semblance of historic conditions while promoting forest health, vigor and productivity, and aspen restoration; by removing insect damaged timber and reducing overstocking through emulation of mixed severity and stand replacing fires.

Natural regeneration would be expected. No rare plants or cover types have been noted or observed within the project area.

#### MEASURES RECOMMENDED TO MITIGATE POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

- 1) Compliance with Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP's), Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) laws, the Montana Stream Protection Act (124 Permit) and applicable DNRC Forest Management ARMS.
- 2) The temporary stream crossing would comply with the guidelines and specifications stated in the 124 permit. Proceed with proposed project in accordance with DNRC Attachment 'B' - Road Construction, Improvement and Maintenance Specifications.
- 3) 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. A designated skid trail would be utilized through the northern portion of the harvest unit to protect riparian areas.
- 4) 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  $\leq 50\%$ . Sustained slopes  $> 50\%$  would be harvested utilizing a winch and cable line. 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.
- 5) For slope stability on the road construction segments, construct cutslopes at 1:1 (run/rise) in common material and 1/4:1 for rock. Install adequate road drainage to control erosion concurrent with harvest activities and road opening and new construction. Provide effective sediment filtration along drainage features near crossing sites. New construction and major skid trails on State lands would be closed with slash and debris and/or barriers, and adequate drainage provided.
- 6) 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.
- 7) At sale closure, grass seed roads, skid trails (where needed) and landings with an appropriate seed mixture.

- 8) 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.
- 9) Retain live, healthy older trees and stand attributes suitable for old growth development where available and applicable.
- 10) Contact DNRC wildlife biologist should any threatened or endangered species be encountered within the proposed project area.

# ATTACHMENT F

## FOX TROT SALVAGE TIMBER PERMIT

### CHECKLIST FOR ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND SENSITIVE SPEICES Pertains to Section II. 9. of the DS-252 DNRC Environmental Checklist (Rev. August 1, 2007) CENTRAL LAND OFFICE

Prepared by Chuck Barone

December 30, 2010

Threatened and Endangered Species	[Y/N] Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures N = Not Present or No Impact is Likely to Occur Y = Impacts May Occur (Explain Below)
<p>Grizzly Bear (<i>Ursus arctos</i>) Habitat: recovery areas, security from human activity</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project area lies outside of any grizzly bear recovery area. The nearest recovery area is the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (USFWS 1993) situated 70 miles southeast of the project area. The project area is comprised of dry forest types not typically preferred by bears. Grizzly bear use of the Pioneer Mountains may occur, however, the project area is currently considered outside of occupied habitat (Interagency Occupied Habitat Map, September 2002). Riparian habitats preferred by bears do not occur in the project area. Human access levels are presently moderate due to the public access. Approximately 655 feet of temporary new road would be constructed to low standard. Any new road construction would be to minimum standard and would be physically closed on the State parcel at project completion. The potential for any measurable increases in bear-human conflicts following the project activities are expected to be negligible. Adverse direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to bears as a result of this project are not expected.</p>
<p>Lynx (<i>Felis lynx</i>) Habitat: mosaics--dense sapling and old forest &gt;5,000 ft. elev.</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project area is located along the fringes of preferred lynx habitat. All of the lynx habitat on the State parcel would be categorized as "other" habitat. There are no other types of habitat within the State parcel. Of the ~24 acres of potential lynx habitat on the State parcel, ~17 acres of "other" habitat are proposed for harvest leaving ~17 acres converted to temporary non-habitat. No mature foraging habitat is present within the proposed harvest units. Preferred lynx habitat is marginal within the proposed project area due to the lack of highly desirable habitat conditions for lynx and their primary prey,</p>

	snowshoe hares. Adverse direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to lynx as a result of this project are expected to be minimal.
Gray Wolf ( <i>Canis lupus</i> ) Habitat: ample big game pops., security from human activity	[N] The proposed project area falls within the Central Idaho Nonessential Experimental Area for gray wolves. The closest packs in the vicinity of the project area are the Bender and Horse Prairie packs. Individuals from this pack or transients from other packs could occasionally use portions of the project area, however, due to the size, nature 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 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.

<b>DNRC Sensitive Species</b>	[Y/N] Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures N = Not Present or No Impact is Likely to Occur Y = Impacts May Occur (Explain Below)
Bald Eagle ( <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> ) Habitat: late-successional forest <1 mile from open water	[N] Bald Eagles have been documented within the quarter latilong (L36D) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). No known nesting habitat occurs on, or within one mile of the proposed project area, and the project area likely occurs outside of any Bald Eagle nesting home range. No direct, indirect or cumulative effects to Bald Eagles associated with this project are anticipated.
Black-Backed Woodpecker ( <i>Picoides arcticus</i> ) Habitat: mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	[N] Black-backed woodpeckers have not been documented within the quarter latilong (L36D) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). Stands found within the project area are presently experiencing moderate insect activity. No recent burns ( $\leq 5$ years old) have occurred within the State tracts or adjoining sections. Thus, foraging and nesting opportunities are presently limited. No direct, indirect or cumulative effects to black-backed woodpeckers would be expected to occur as a result of this project.
Black-tailed Prairie Dog ( <i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i> ) Habitat: Prairie, shortgrass prairie, badlands	[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.
Flammulated Owl ( <i>Otus flammeolus</i> ) Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and	[N] Flammulated owls have not been documented within the quarter latilong (L36D) that encompasses the proposed project area

Doug.-fir forest	(Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). The parcel involved in the proposed project maintains an elevation of 6600-6900 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.
Greater Sage-grouse ( <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i> ) Habitat: sagebrush semi-desert	[N] Sage grouse have been documented in the quarter latilong (L36D) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). Sage Grouse do occur within the project area and a lek has been identified within one mile of the project area along the main haul route. 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 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 not been documented within the quarter latilong (L36D) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). No high gradient streams suitable for use by harlequins occur within the project area or along proposed haul routes. 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 Plover have not been documented within the quarter latilong (L36D) 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. 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 (L36D) that encompasses the proposed project area (Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). No cliff features suitable for use by nesting peregrine falcons 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	[N] Pileated woodpeckers have been documented within the quarter latilong (L36D) that encompasses the proposed project area

larch-fir forest	(Skaar 1996, MNHP 2010). The project area is poorly suited for use by pileated woodpeckers. 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.