

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Willows End Timber Salvage AP
Proposed Implementation Date:	Upon Approval
Proponent:	Richard George Logging Inc.
Location:	S8 T8N R15W
County:	Granite County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Willows End Timber Salvage is a Department of Natural Resources and Conservation timber sale that was purchased by Richard George Logging Inc. of Seeley Lake, Montana. In the course of removing mountain pine beetle infested lodgepole pine from an area adjacent to Upper Willow Creek, the buncher operator inadvertently harvested approximately 300 feet inside the 50 foot SMZ buffer on an irrigation ditch (Class 3 Stream). Upon review of the Streamside Management Zone violation, it was decided by DNRC representatives that the best course of action would be to allow a skidder to retrieve the felled trees under an alternative practice. The retrieval would entail operating a grapple skidder inside the 50 foot SMZ buffer. The skidder would be allowed to operate up to, but not inside, a 15 foot buffer on the irrigation ditch. Operation would occur in a "straight in and straight out" manner to minimize both ground disturbance and ground distance traveled inside the 50 foot buffer. Operations would only occur during a period where ground conditions are dry to less than 20% moisture content.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Richard George (contractor), Fred Staedler, Jeff Collins, Gary Frank, Roger Ziesak and Sean Steinebach of MT DNRC.

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

N/A

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A –No Action. This alternative would not allow bunched trees to be skidded with a grapple skidder. Felled trees would be winched out of the buffer zone.

Alternative B – Action. This alternative would allow operation of a grapple skidder inside the 50 foot SMZ buffer to retrieve buncher piled trees. The skidder would be allowed to operate up to, but not inside, a 15 foot buffer on the irrigation ditch. Operation would occur in a "straight in and straight out" manner to minimize both ground disturbance and ground distance traveled inside the 50 foot buffer. Operations would only occur during a period where ground conditions are dry to less than 20% moisture content.

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.

This Alternative Practice is in accordance with the findings of the Willows End Timber Salvage Environmental Analysis. Areas of disturbance would be minimal and those areas would be reseeded with an appropriate seed mix that is consistent with the timber sale contract. No unacceptable impacts are anticipated.

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.

The operating restrictions outlined under Willows End Timber Salvage Environmental Analysis, in addition to the level nature of the banks, would prevent run-off from reaching the irrigation ditch. Areas of disturbance would be minimal and those areas would be reseeded with an appropriate seed mix that is consistent with the timber sale contract. A fifteen foot buffer would be adequate distance from the irrigation ditch in this situation.

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.

N/A

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.

The understory vegetation is grasses and forbes. Dry ground conditions, mitigation measures and operation in a "straight in and straight out" manner would prevent significant disturbance to ground vegetation. This AP is consistent with the findings of the Willows End Timber Salvage Environmental Analysis. No unacceptable impacts are anticipated with the action alternative.

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.

The environmental effects of this AP on terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats have been analyzed in the Willows End EA. With the implementation of recommended operating conditions, no unacceptable impacts are anticipated.

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.

The environmental effects of this AP on unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been analyzed in the Willows End EA. No unacceptable impacts are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

None were identified.

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 diminished aesthetics may be perceived by travelers/recreationists on Upper Willow Creek Road. Cumulative effects would be expected to be minimal.

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.

N/A

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.

N/A

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.

N/A

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

N/A

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.

Two people would be employed during the harvest.

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.

Negligible tax revenue would be generated through this harvest.

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

N/A

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.

N/A

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.

N/A

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.

N/A

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

N/A

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

N/A

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.

N/A

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Sean Steinebach	Date: 9/21/11
	Title: Service Forester	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B – Action Alternative

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No unacceptable impacts are anticipated.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

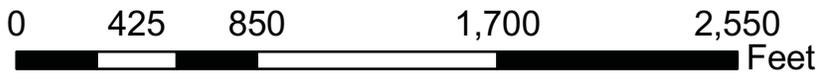
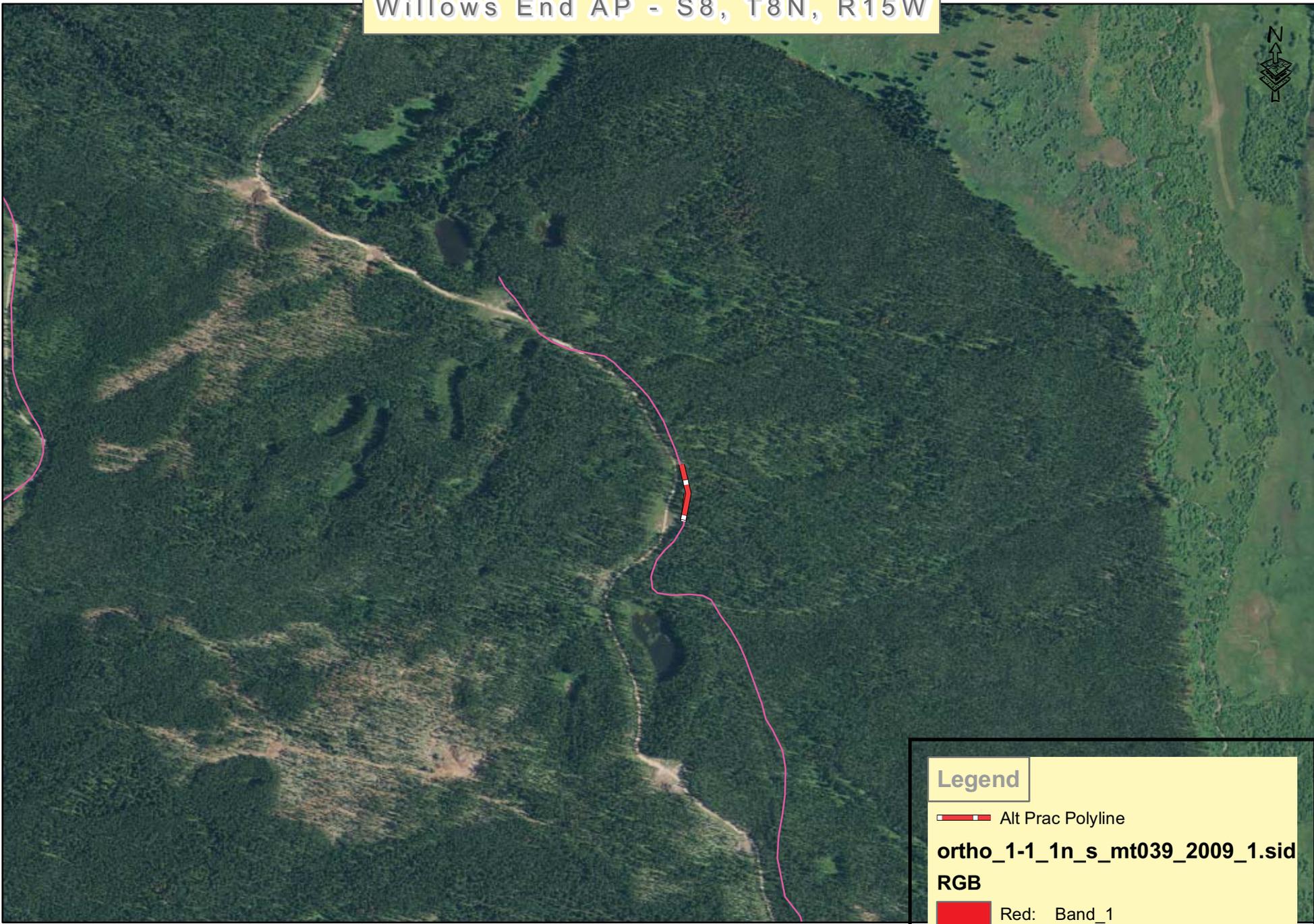
EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name:
	Title:
Signature:	Date:

Willows End AP - S8, T8N, R15W



Legend

-  Alt Prac Polyline
- ortho_1-1_1n_s_mt039_2009_1.sid**
- RGB**
-  Red: Band_1
-  Green: Band_2
-  Blue: Band_3
-  Irrigation Ditch

September 27, 2011

Ref: Richard George/Willows End Timber Salvage SMZ AP

Dear Mr. George,

This letter is in reference to a request made by Richard George Logging Inc., represented by Richard George, to the Department of Natural Resource and Conservation for an Alternative Practice. This AP is located in Section 8, T8N, R15W. After review of the Checklist Environmental Assessment prepared for this request, the Alternative Practice to allow equipment operations within the SMZ is approved, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The skidding inside the SMZ buffer will occur no closer than 15 feet from the irrigation ditch ordinary high water mark.
- 2) Operation of equipment inside the SMZ will only take place on slopes less than 35%.
- 3) Skidder will enter and exit the SMZ buffer perpendicular to the irrigation ditch (straight in and straight out).
- 4) Operations will only occur during periods of dry (<20%) ground conditions.

Approved Alternative Practices, including any additional conditions required by DNRC, shall have the same force and authority as the standards contained in 77-5-303, MCA, and shall be enforceable by DNRC under 77-5-305, MCA, to the same extent as such standards.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your operators understand that an Alternative Practice has been issued for their operations in this area, and that these conditions must be fully met to achieve compliance with the SMZ Law.

This approval is contingent upon your execution and return of the attached statement to the DNRC Anaconda Unit Office.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. Please call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Sean Steinebach
Service Forester

cc: HRA file, Landowner, Applicant,
Unit Office, Land Office,
Service Forestry Bureau

September 27, 2011

ALTERNATIVE PRACTICE RESPONSIBILITY AFFIDAVIT

Willows End Timber Salvage AP

In consideration of DNRC's approval of the alternative practice(s) in Sec. 8 T8N, R15W, I hereby certify that I, or by written contract the legal entity I represent, am responsible for the compliance with the Montana Streamside Management Zone Law. I understand that failure to implement any of the mitigation measures required by the DNRC will be considered a violation of the SMZ Law (77-5-301 et. Seq.), and may result in penalties assessed against me or the legal entity I represent.

Signature of Responsible Party

Date