

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Mohican Wagner
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	12/15/2011
<b>Proponent:</b>	Ottman Forestry Consultants and Montana DNRC
<b>Location:</b>	16, T15N, R2W
<b>County:</b>	Lewis & Clark
<b>Trust:</b>	Common Schools

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

A timber permit primarily to salvage Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) killed timber as well as some incidental green tree thinning to promote health of the remaining trees.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The adjacent land owner (Sterling Ranch) was contacted, and has areas of MPB salvage on nearby deeded lands. (These lands are fully surrounded by Sterling Ranch deeded land.)

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

A burning permit would be required for slash pile burning, along with coordination of burning activities through the MT/ID Airshed Coordinating Group. No other permits are directly needed for this project. (The Sterling Ranch has conducted some road improvements and related stream side stabilization actions as part of their operations, which ultimately have improved access which would make this project feasible.)

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No action – do not salvage the MPB killed timber

The proposed action – Salvage the MPB killed timber while material is still sound enough to generate a positive financial return to the school trust.

### 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.*

Rugged rock outcrops are present in this area, along either side of Wagner Creek. Minimal potential for compaction or erosion if standard Forestry BMPs are followed. Spur roads for access to landing areas, generally located on slope breaks and saddles, would be constructed. Solid rock limits the potential locations for these routes but viable locations are generally stable. Constructed roads would be abandoned following installation of erosion control features to ensure long term stability of the profile. There is no public motorized access to the

area, so no threat of ongoing road use or any need to physically block the road to prevent future vehicle use or damage.

---

#### **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.*

Proposed harvest area(s) are well above Wagner Creek. Most of the drainages crossing the proposed harvest area(s) are ephemeral. None-the-less, some equipment restriction zones may be used to protect drainage bottoms from excessive disturbance. Standard BMPs should prevent any water quality impacts.

---

#### **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.*

Short term particulate emission during slash burning operations would occur. DNRC slash burning operations are coordinated through the MT/ID Airshed Coordinating Group, to ensure that the cumulative effects of slash burning within an airshed do not lead to adverse effects.

---

#### **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 areas proposed for salvage harvest are mostly Ponderosa Pine stands showing heavy degrees of mortality from the on-going MPB infestation. As is sometimes the case, pockets of green trees are encountered during a salvage harvest. The proposed project would include thinning these pockets of green trees while there. Harvest of some of the Douglas-fir which are mixed through the stand would help off-set development costs while leaving the stand conditions where the fir pockets are located in a healthier, more sustainable condition. Indications are that stands of Ponderosa Pine, thinned to wider tree spacing, reduces the incidents of MPB attack in the remaining trees. The salvage operation would have little effect directly to the forest vegetation, since the stand changes have already been effected by the MPB attack. Some still green patches, thinned as the operations progress, may be protected from future MPB attack.

There is spotted knapweed in some areas along Wagner Creek and along access roads through the private land. It is likely that some knapweed seed is present in the project area, due to dispersal by wind or wildlife. The harvest area(s) would be monitored for at least 2 years following harvest, with weed management actions and further monitoring to be determined.

Disturbed areas at roads, landings and main skid trails would be seeded to grass following harvest activities.

---

#### **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 area is used by Whitetail Deer, Mule Deer, Elk, grouse, bear, numerous bird species, and fish in Wagner Creek. Many stand changes have already taken place due to the MPB infestation. Protection of select snags for cavity nesting would maintain habitat for those species. Course woody debris for small mammal habitat will increase due to dead fall without the project, and would still be provided due to stem breakage likely to occur during operations, if the proposal takes place.

---

**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.*

Grizzly Bear may pass through this project area, though the project is outside of the mapped non-recovery occupied habitat for Grizzly which is being used in the ongoing state HCP analysis.

Gray Wolves have been known to occupy areas of the Sieben Livestock Ranch, and have caused some stock mortality.

As wide ranging species, some transient use by wolves or Grizzly may take place. Given the scattered arrangement of the operations (State as well as Ranch operations), and the short duration (winter of 2011 – 12), no adverse effects to either of these species are expected.

The DNRC CLO list of threatened, endangered and sensitive species was reviewed and no adverse effects are anticipated. This review checklist is attached.

---

**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Project area would take place in areas where, due to terrain, little potential for past historical or cultural resources occur. Review of similar terrain for the Stickney Creek Timber sale in the mid 1990s did not indicate the presence of any cultural resources.

---

**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 project location is in rugged terrain, variable aspects and naturally variable forested stand conditions. Project is not visible from any public travel way or populated area. There would be no adverse aesthetic effects.

---

**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 other nearby projects, other than some potential salvage harvest by the Ranch on their lands.

---

**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.*

This area was reviewed in 1995 for a timber sale. At that time, the road access being used was on the east side of the Wagner creek drainage and due to rock outcrops it was thought infeasible to reach these proposed stands on the west side of Wagner Creek. This proposal would use a different access route from the west.

---

**IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION**

- *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.*

No unusual health or safety risks.

---

**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

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

Project is relatively small, but would provide a few weeks work for a small logging crew.

---

**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.*

Timber harvest is taking place all though this area of Montana and this project would not result in any shifts of employment.

---

**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.*

No measurable effects to taxes or revenues would occur.

---

**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*

Project would not create any added demand for government services.

---

**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.*

There are no local zoning plans in this area. Operations proposed would comply with the State Forest Management Plan and Administrative Rules.

---

**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.*

Tract is only accessible with permission from the Sterling Ranch to cross their private lands which surround the tract. The project would not adversely affect the recreational uses on the tract, for those with this permission. Ottman Forestry Consultants work regularly with the Sterling Ranch and would be responsible for obtaining the access for this project.

---

**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.*

No shifts in housing are anticipated.

---

**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

No affects to any traditional lifestyle are anticipated.

---

**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

The area is typical for this region, with no unique features.

---

**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.*

Salvage harvest of timber on trust lands, when it can be done profitably and without adverse environmental effects, has been directed by state law. Presently, there has been a market for MPB killed and Blue Stained Ponderosa Pine which yields a small but positive stumpage value to the trust. Selective marketing of some live Douglas-fir would help cover development costs. For the available dead Ponderosa Pine market(s), this sale area is about at the outer fringe for viable operations, due to hauling costs.

Timber permit rules for salvage operations allow for the negotiated sale of up to 500 MBF or equivalent in sawlog volume, with not over 100 MBF or equivalent in green tree harvest. Estimated total volume of sawlog for this operation is 387 MBF and to off-set development costs and marginal products, the project would be monitored to achieve close to 100 MBF of live harvest. Estimated total stumpage to the Trust is approximately \$5900.00.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> D.J. Bakken	<b>Date:</b> 12/7/2011
	<b>Title:</b> Helena Unit Manager	

---

**V. FINDING**

---

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

I have chosen the proposed action – Salvage the MPB killed timber while material is still sound enough to generate a positive financial return to the school trust.

---

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

---

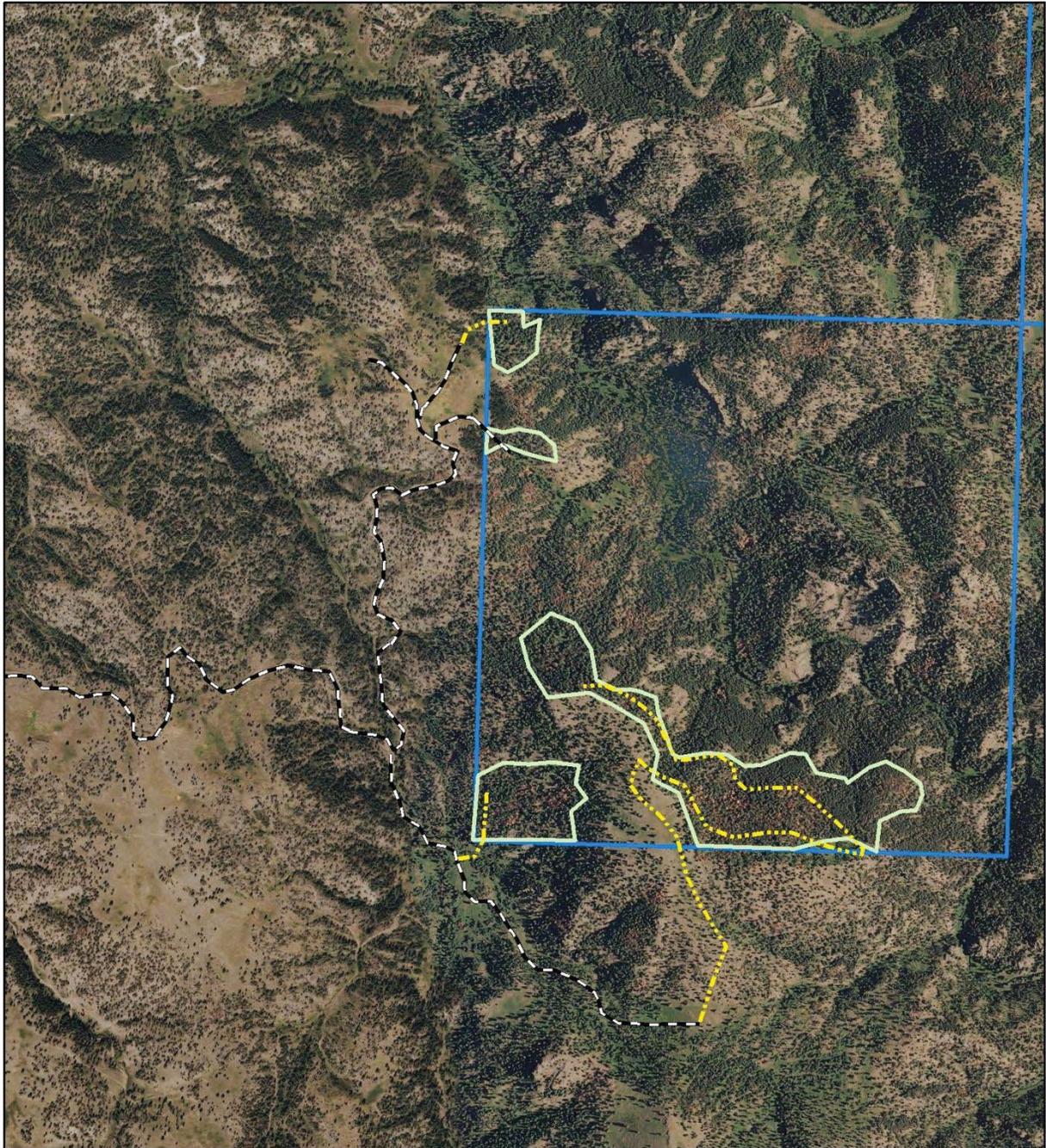
**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS       More Detailed EA       No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Gavin Anderson
	<b>Title:</b> Forest & Lands Program Manager, Central Land Office, DNRC
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 12/9/11

# Mohican Wagner

16, T15N, R2W



0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Miles



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

<b>Threatened and Endangered 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)
Gray Wolf ( <i>Canis lupus</i> ) Habitat: ample big game pops., security from human activity	[Y/N ] May pass through the area, not likely to be affected due to scattered operations and short duration
Grizzly Bear ( <i>Ursus arctos</i> ) Habitat: recovery areas, security from human activity	[Y/N ] May pass through the area, not likely to be affected due to scattered operations and short duration. Is outside the mapped non-recovery occupied area.
Lynx ( <i>Felis lynx</i> ) Habitat: mosaics--dense sapling and old forest >5,000 ft. elev.	[ N ]

<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	[ Y/N ] Some transient fly over activity, but no known nest sites and project is not near typical nesting areas.
Black-Backed Woodpecker ( <i>Picoides arcticus</i> ) Habitat: mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	[ N ] No nearby fires. Abundant MPB mortality would remain even after a salvage harvest.
Black-tailed Prairie Dog ( <i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i> ) Habitat: Prairie, shortgrass prairie, badlands	[ N ]
Flammulated Owl ( <i>Otus flammeolus</i> ) Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and Doug.-fir forest	[ N ]
Greater Sage-grouse ( <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i> ) Habitat: sagebrush semi-desert	[ N ]
Harlequin Duck ( <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i> ) Habitat: white-water streams, boulder and cobble substrates	[ N ]
Mountain Plover ( <i>Charadrius montanus</i> )	[ N ]

Habitat: short-grass prairie, alkaline flats, prairie dog towns	
Northern Bog Lemming ( <i>Synaptomys borealis</i> ) Habitat: sphagnum meadows, bogs, fens with thick moss mats	[ N ]
Peregrine Falcon ( <i>Falco peregrinus</i> ) Habitat: cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	[N ]
Pileated Woodpecker ( <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i> ) Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest	[ N ]
Townsend's Big-Eared Bat ( <i>Plecotus townsendii</i> ) Habitat: caves, caverns, old mines	[N ]