

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Freeman Ridge Reciprocal Access Agreement (AKA: Stimson #4)
Proposed Implementation Date:	Fall / Winter 2013
Proponent:	Stimson Lumber Company
Location:	State lands on Section 32 T31N R33W
County:	Lincoln

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Montana DNRC is currently working with Stimson Lumber Company (Stimson) to craft a reciprocal access agreement that would provide access benefits for both parties.

DNRC would grant Stimson access across state land to construct a road approximately 760 feet in length. Stimson would grant the State access on approximately 11,870 feet of existing road across their property. The property involved is located approximately 4 ¼ miles south southeast of Troy.

Lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the School of Mines. The Board of Land Commissioners and the DNRC are required, by law, to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for these beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA). The DNRC would manage lands involved in this project in accordance with the State Forest Land Management Plan (DNRC 1996), the Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.401 through 456), the recently adopted Montana DNRC Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP; DNRC 2011), and all other rules and regulations

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.

A public scoping notice that described the proposal was posted on the DNRC’s website for seven days from September 19, 2013 through September 26, 2013. No comments were received.

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.

N/A

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 Alternative

A reciprocal access agreement would not be entered into and exchange of easements would not be exchanged in the proposed project area at this time.

Action Alternative

A reciprocal access agreement would be entered into an easement would be granted to Stimson on State land in section 32 T31N R33W; an easement would be granted to the State on Stimson land in sections 31&32 t31N R33W and section 5 T30N R33W. The easements exchanged would both be 60’ in width and for all lawful purposes.

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.

The project is located on Landtype 355 according to the Soil Survey of Kootenai National Forest Area, Montana and Idaho. Compacted glacial till underlies a volcanic-ash influence loess surface layer up to 14 inches thick. The lower surface soils may have rock fragments that comprise up to 50% of the content. Vegetation is a mixed forest of western larch, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine and grand fir. The understory is dominated by forbs and low growing shrubs. Road construction may encounter hard rock. Cutbanks formed during road construction can slough if too steep. Tread erosion of fine material will leave a rough cobbly surface. Droughtiness may limit revegetation on cutslopes.

No additional direct, indirect or cumulative impacts would result from the No Action Alternative, if selected.

Direct, indirect and cumulative impacts associated with the Action Alternative include the removal of approximately 0.4 acres from timber production. Increased erosion potential on cutslopes and fill slopes would result until vegetation becomes established.

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.

This project lies within the Lake Creek drainage. Existing roads and roads that would be constructed do not cross perennial streams. Because the proposed road construction would be located well away from surface water and all Forestry Best Management Practices would be followed, it is not anticipated that the action alternative would result in measureable adverse direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to water quality.

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.

The project area is located in Montana Airshed 1. Smoke would be generated from the burning of slash generated from clearing right of way timber and vegetation; however, adherence to the Montana/Idaho State Airshed Group regulations requires that burning occur during periods with adequate airshed ventilation. This would reduce the potential for detrimental contributions of associated air pollutants. Dust may be created from log hauling on portions of native surface roads during summer and fall months.

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.

Approximately 0.69 acres would need to be cleared of forest vegetation during road construction across the 760 feet through State land. This area would be converted from forest cover type to a grass covered road. There are no rare plants or cover types that would be affected.

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.

No new stream crossings are associated with either alternative. The risk of adverse direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to fisheries and aquatic life would be very low.

A coarse filter analysis was conducted to address potential adverse effects to wildlife associated with habitat connectivity and removal of mature forest cover, changes in the abundance of snags and coarse woody debris, and old-growth forest habitat availability and fragmentation. Due to the small <1 acre area that would be cleared for road construction, negligible adverse direct, indirect, and cumulative effects associated with the availability of snags and coarse woody debris, mature forest cover, and old-growth habitat availability and would be anticipated under the Action Alternative.

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.

No Action Alternative: No change

Action Alternative: Habitat assessments were conducted for federally listed species in northwest Montana, including Canada lynx and grizzly bears. The project area is considered grizzly bear non-recovery occupied habitat associated with the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem (USFWS 1993, Wittinger 2002). Under the Action Alternative, 760 feet of road would be constructed across DNRC-managed lands, increasing access to the area. However, the road would be gated and closed to the general public. Additionally, spring timing restrictions limiting access to the area would apply from April 1- June 15th. Given the limited road construction and spring timing restriction, negligible adverse direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to grizzly bears would be expected under the Action Alternative. The proposed activities would not affect lynx habitat structure and are not anticipated to adversely affect lynx.

Habitat assessments were also conducted for the following sensitive species: bald eagle, black-backed woodpecker, Coeur d'Alene salamander, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, common loon, fisher, flammulated owl, gray wolf, harlequin duck, northern bog lemming, peregrine falcon, pileated woodpecker, Townsend's big-eared bat, wolverine, and big game. Due to the <1 acre harvest of trees to clear the road, small 760 foot section of road that would be constructed, and the closure of the road to the general public, the proposed activities are not anticipated adversely affect sensitive wildlife species.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

No known historical features are associated with this land. Should historical archeological or cultural features be discovered during road construction or maintenance activities, work in that area would be suspended until the site could be properly evaluated.

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.

The segment of proposed construction would be visible from portions of Lake Creek Road, a paved county rural route. Because this is an extension of an existing road, no anticipated affects to aesthetics are expected.

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.

None would be expected

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.

The Iron Schoolhouse Timber Sale EA (2012) pertained to this project area for road construction and timber harvesting.

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.

None would be affected.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

None would be affected.

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.

None would be affected

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.

None would be affected

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

None would be affected.

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.

None would be affected.

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.

The project area is behind a year round closed gate; therefore, recreation access is limited. No changes to current conditions are expected.

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.

None would be affected.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None would be affected.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

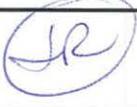
None would be affected.

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.

If a reciprocal access agreement was entered into and easements exchanged, it would facilitate a reduced logging cost for the acres tributary to the roads being acquired. The School of Mines trust would benefit from acquiring this access.

The timber removed would generated approximately \$250 for the School of Mines Trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Jeremy Rank		Date: 10/16/2013
	Title: Management Forester		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

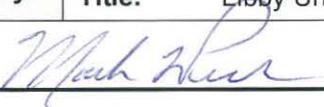
Upon review of the Checklist EA, I find the Action Alternative as proposed meets the intent of the project objectives as stated on page 1, Type and Purpose of Action. It complies with all pertinent environmental laws, best management practices and the DNRC State Forest Land Management Plan. The No Action Alternative does not meet the project objectives. For these reasons I have selected the Action Alternative for implementation on this project.

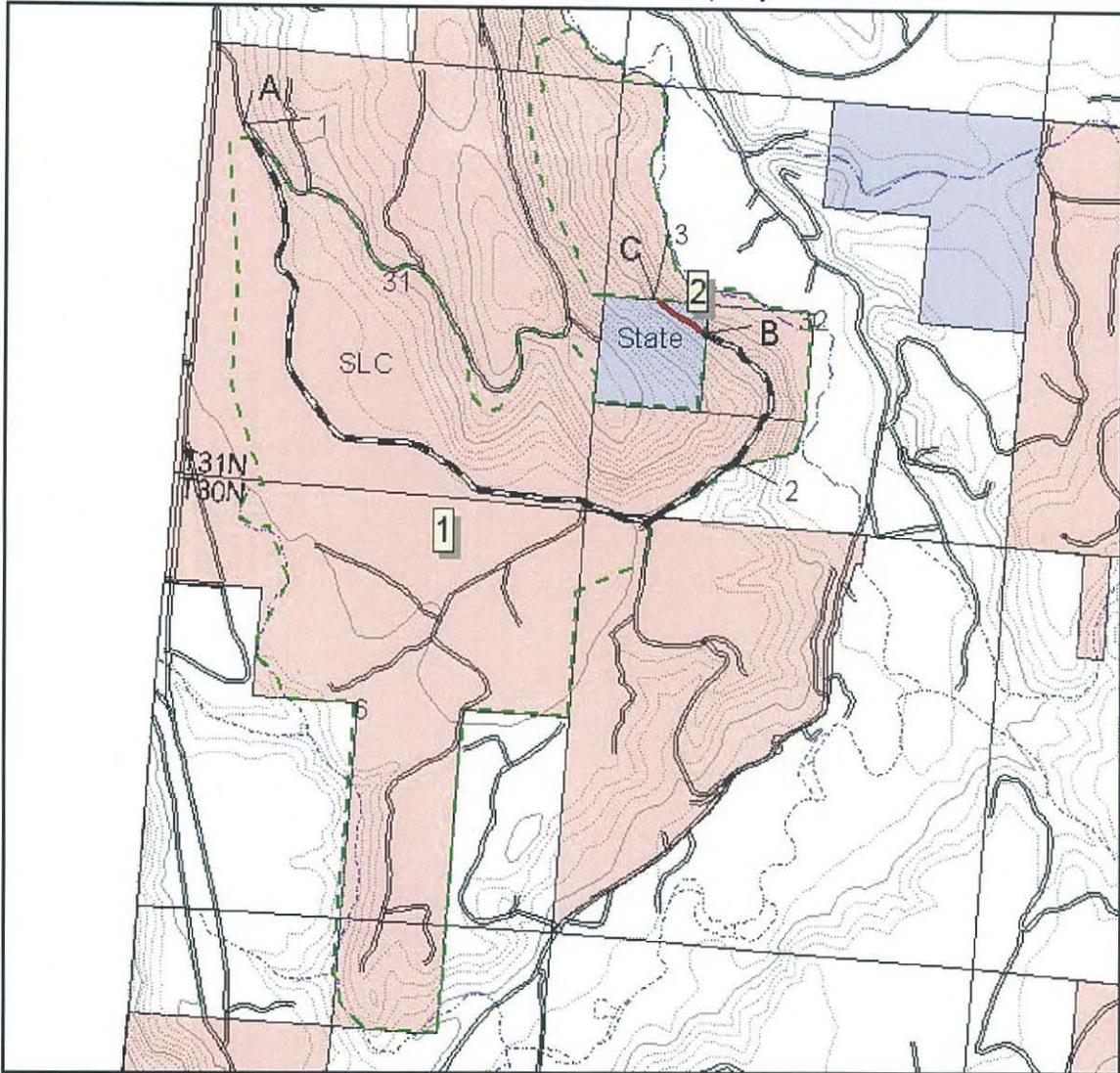
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

After a thorough review of the scoping documents, Department policies, standards, guidelines, and the State Forest Land Management Plan, I find all the identified resource management concerns have been fully addressed in this Checklist EA. The action alternative provides the opportunity to improve access and road maintenance within the project area. I find there will be no significant impacts as a result of implementing the action alternative.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS
 More Detailed EA
 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Mark Peck		Date: 10/16/2013
	Title: Libby Unit Manager		
Signature:			



Freeman
 T30 & 31N, R33W, P.M.M.

Tributary Acres:
 Trib Area 1: 840 ac
 Trib Area 2: 3 ac

Rd Segments (feet) Road Cost:
 A-B: 11,870 ft. 1-2: \$10,000/mile; 9,750 ft.
 B-C: 760 ft. 2-3: \$15,000/mile; 2,880 ft.

Legend

	Tributary Area Number		Contour
	Easement from Stimson to State		200 ft Index
	Easement from State to Stimson		40 ft Contour
	Road		Stimson Lumber
	Tributary Area Boundary		State of Montana

Scale: 1:24000
 Date: 8/28/13
 Map Type: Trib Area
 County: Lincoln
 Prepared By: B. Cannata

