DNRC Trust Land Management Division

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Granite Creek Salvage Timber Permit
Proposed Implementation Date:	June 15, 2006
Proponent:	Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Location:	Approximately 2 miles south of Libby at junction of Libby Cr. and Granite Cr.
County:	Lincoln

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation proposes to salvage harvest approximately 200 tons of dead and down sawlogs from 45 acres. The objective of the proposed project would be to capture the value of standing dead and down timber. This project could generate approximately $3,000 for the Montana Public Building Trust.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Scoping consisted of contacting 2 adjacent landowners (Neil at Granite Concrete and Richard Darsow) and input was received by staff DNRC Biologist and Hydrologist. The project area does not have any leases. Montana DNRC service forester has issued an alternative practice.

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

Montana DNRC – Alternative practice was issued. See attachment "F".

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A – Action: The action alternative would seek to remove standing dead and down timber.
Alternative B – No Action: The no action alternative would not salvage harvest the dead and down trees. Project objectives would not be met and opportunity for the limited access would be lost.

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 area is characterized as recent floodplains with soils formed in alluvium consisting of stratified sands, gravels and silts. The soils in the project area have a moderate to high risk of displacement. Please see Attachment D (Hydrology Analysis) for further information.

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.

Two Class 1 SMZs are present (Granite Creek and Libby Creek). These creeks border the proposed project area on two sides. The proposed project was reviewed by a DNRC Hydrologist. Please see Attachment D for further information. Dry, relic stream channels are present in the project area and do not appear to meet the legal definition of class 3, but will be treated as such in accordance with the alternative practice. See Attachment "F".

No unacceptable impact would be anticipated with either alternative.

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.

Some particulate could be created during pile burning if that is required to reduce logging debris. No unacceptable impacts would be anticipated with either alternative.

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.

N old growth stands would be affected.
No rare or sensitive plants were identified during field reconnaissance.

Alternative A – 45 acres would be treated by removing standing dead and down timber. The amount of forested acres would not change. Wildland fire fuels would be reduced.
Alternative B – The no action alternative would not salvage any of the dead trees. The standing dead and down timber would remain, providing coarse woody debris and wildland fire fuel.

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.

Big Game:
The proposed project area serves as moose, deer, and elk winter range. Year-round use by at least some of these species is likely. Proposed activities could improve big game habitats removing potential barriers to travel while improving the potential for forage production with the increased growing space. Overall negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to big game would be anticipated.

General Wildlife:
The proposed harvesting would alter existing habitats. Species using appreciable amounts of coarse woody debris would see a reduction in habitats, while species relying on more open, brush and younger forest habitats would see a slight increase in available habitats. Overall, given the size of the area, and the expected changes to habitats, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated.

Please see Attachment E for further information

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.

Threatened and Endangered Species: The proposed project area is 4 miles from the nearest known bald eagle nest, 4 miles outside of the grizzly bear recovery zone, 20 miles from the nearest wolf pack home range, and occurs outside of elevations and habitats where lynx are typically found. Given the location on the landscape, habitats present, and potential for use, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated to any of the threatened or endangered species.

Sensitive Species:
Potential pileated woodpecker habitats exist in the proposed project area. Proposed harvesting could minimally reduce foraging habitats, while having no effects to nesting habitats. Biologist's recommendation is no harvesting of cottonwood trees and snags in the stands. Potential fisher habitats also exist in the area, however use is unlikely given the location on the landscape, proximity to human development, habitats present, and general disconnected nature of the landscape. Proposed harvesting could remove resting and denning habitats, but retention of cull material would retain some suitable habitats for fisher should they be using the area. Overall negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated to pileated woodpecker and fishers. Habitats for other sensitive species are either not present or would not be affected with the proposed activates.

Please see Attachment E for further information.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The DNRC staff archaeologist inspected the proposed project area. No heritage properties were identified in the area of potential effect. No additional archaeological investigative work is recommended.

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.

No unacceptable impacts would be expected with either alternative.

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 unacceptable impacts would be expected with either alternative.

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.

No other environmental documents pertinent to the analysis area are known.

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 unacceptable impacts would be expected with either alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

There would be no impact by implementing the proposed project.

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.

This proposed project would create work for approximately 3 people throughout the duration of the activities.

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.

Income tax revenue from the salvage operations will increase slightly. Due to the relatively small size of the proposed project, there will be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on tax revenue. Property taxes will not change.

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

There will be no measurable cumulative impacts related to the demand for government services due to the relatively small scale of the proposed salvage operation.

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.

In June 1996, DNRC began a phased-in implementation of the State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP). The management direction provided in the plan comprises the framework within which specific project planning and activities take place. The plan philosophy and appropriate Resource Management Standards have been incorporated into the design of the proposed action.

In September 2003, The DNRC implemented the Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management. These rules define the resource management standards that guide the design of the project.

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.

This project will not influence the recreation potential. No recreational or wildernesses areas occur within the analysis area.

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.

There will be no measurable cumulative impacts related to population and housing due to the relatively small size of the salvage project.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Native communities or lifestyles will not be disrupted.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Cultural uniqueness and diversity would not 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 cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Jeremy Rank	**Date:** May 17, 2006
	Title: Libby Unit Forester	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A, salvage harvesting is selected.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant impacts are expected. All current resource management standards will be applied.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** Dave Marsh	
	Title: Libby Unit Forest Management Supervisor	
Signature: Dave Marsh		**Date:** 6/12/06