

COVER LETTER

January 15, 2010

TO: Governor's Office, Vivian Hammill, Rm. 204, State Capitol, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Director's Office
Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, US F&G Bldg. 1625 11th Ave. Helena, MT 59620
Director's Office
Information Services Section
Water Resources Division, 1424 9th Ave., P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 E. 6th Ave. Helena, MT 59620
Director's Office
Parks Division
Mack Long, Regional Supervisor, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 2, 3201 Spurgin Rd. Missoula, MT 59804
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620
Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
Ravalli County Commissioners, 205 Bedford St., Box 5001, Hamilton, MT 59840-2853
Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Helena Regulatory Office, 10 W. 15th St. Suite 2200, Helena, MT 59626
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MT Field Office, 585 Shepard Way, Helena, MT 59601
District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service, Darby Ranger District, 712 Hwy 93 N, P.O. Box 388, Darby, MT 59828

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Finding of No Significant Impact / Decision Notice have been prepared for the Painted Rocks Mountain Pine Beetle Timber Management Project. Please contact James P. Domino at (406) 444-6622 (e-mail jdomino@mt.gov) should you have any questions about the Finding of No Significant Impact / Decision Notice or the EA. Copies of the EA are available upon request. The EA can also be viewed on the DNRC website at www.dnrc.mt.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tom Schultz
Water Resources Division Administrator

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT / NOTICE OF DECISION

January 19th, 2010

Dear Reader:

The Montana DNRC recently released an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Painted Rocks Mountain Pine Beetle Timber Management Project, located on a parcel of DNRC State Water Projects land on the east shore of Painted Rocks Reservoir. The parcel is located on the east side of Painted Rocks Reservoir, immediately east and south of Painted Rocks State Park, in Ravalli County, Montana (T2S, R22W, SW ¼, NE ¼, Section 10).

The project calls for the removal of approximately 200 to 300 pine bark beetle infected Douglas fir, ponderosa and lodge pole pine trees on 16.5 acres, totaling approximately 15 to 20,000 board-feet of timber. No ground disturbance would occur as a result of this project. Access roads to the area already exist and the ground is currently frozen and snow covered. The trees would be removed by a three person logging crew and skidded to a loading location on the south side of Painted Rocks State Park. The logs would be transported off-site to a local lumber mill for processing as wood chips. The local school district plans to use the chips as fuel for a new wood chip powered boiler. The trees would be selectively cut, with an emphasis on removing dead or dying trees. Trees that appear to be healthy (not infected) would not be harvested. Slash would be piled on site and removed and/or burned at a later date.

The benefits and purpose of this logging operation involve the removal of diseased timber from the area wildlife habitat enhancement, and helping the local timber industry and school district by providing a local and inexpensive fuel source. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Montana Natural Heritage Program were contacted as part of the EA.

Based on the EA's disclosure and analysis of potential impacts, the DNRC concludes that the action will not result in any significant impacts and will proceed with the project as planned. Copies of the Final EA are available upon request. The EA can be viewed on the DNRC website at www.dnrc.mt.gov in the Environmental Documents section. Please direct any questions to:

James P. Domino
DNRC State Water Projects Bureau
1424 9th Avenue, P.O. Box 201601
Helena, MT 59620-1601
(406) 444-6622 e-mail: jdomino@mt.gov

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely

Tom Schultz
Water Resources Division Administrator

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CONSERVATION



BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE (406) 444-2074
TELEFAX NUMBER (406) 444-2684

STATE OF MONTANA

WATER RESOURCES DIVISION (406) 444-6601
TELEFAX NUMBERS (406) 444-0533 / (406) 444-5918
<http://www.dnrc.mt.gov>

1424 9TH AVENUE
PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

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District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service, Darby Ranger District, 712 Hwy 93 N, P.O. Box 388, Darby, MT 59828

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Painted Rocks Mountain Pine Beetle Timber Management Project, located on DNRC State Water Projects land located immediately south and east of Painted Rocks State Park in Ravalli County, Montana. Please feel free to contact me at (406) 444-6622 should you have any questions or comments about the project. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of James P. Domino in cursive.

James P. Domino
Environmental Science Specialist
State Water Projects Bureau

MEPA ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. **Type of Proposed State Action** Removal of approximately 15 to 20,000 board feet of timber that has been infected and/ or killed from a pine bark beetle infestation.

2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action**

Owner: MT Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, State Water Projects Bureau; Sec. 85-15, MCA .

3. **Name of Project** Painted Rocks Mountain Pine Beetle Timber Management Project.

4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**

MT. Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, State Water Projects Bureau, 1424 9th Ave. P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601 (406) 444-6646

5. **If Applicable:** Estimated Construction/Commencement Date 1/25/10
Estimated Completion Date 2/5/10
Current Status of Project Design (% complete) 100%

6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**

Ravalli County - SW ¼ , NE ¼ , Section 10, T2S, R22W

7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

(a) Developed:	(c) Floodplain	acres
Residential		acres
Industrial	(d) Productive:	
Open Space/	Irrigated cropland.....	acres
Woodlands /	Dry cropland	acres
Recreation.....	Forestry.....	acres
	Rangeland	acres
(b) Wetlands/Riparian	Other	acres
Areas		acres
	(e) Other:	acres

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

See Appendix A, Vicinity and Satellite Maps

9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.

The project calls for the removal of approximately 200 to 300 pine bark beetle infected Douglas fir, ponderosa and lodge pole pine trees on a parcel of DNRC State Water Projects land on the east shore of Painted Rocks Reservoir. The project site is located on the east side of Painted Rocks Reservoir, immediately east and south of Painted Rocks State Park, in Ravalli County, Montana (T2S, R22W, SW ¼, NE ¼, Section 10). The Montana DNRC State Water Projects Bureau owns the property. No ground disturbance would occur as a result of this proposal. Access roads to the areas already exist and the ground is currently frozen and snow covered. The trees would be removed by a three person logging crew and skidded to a loading location on the south side of Painted Rocks State Park. The logs would be transported off-site to a local lumber mill for processing as wood chips. The local school district plans to use the chips as fuel for a wood chip powered boiler. The trees would be selectively cut, with an emphasis on removing dead or dying trees. Trees that appear to be healthy (not infected) would not be harvested. Slash would be piled on site and removed and/or burned at a later date.

The benefits and purpose of this logging operation the removal of diseased timber from the area, the beneficial use of this timber for a local school district, and the enhancement of habitat for local wildlife. The local timber industry would also benefit economically from the project.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), and the Montana Natural Heritage Program were contacted as part of this assessment.

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
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N/A

10. (Continued)

(b) Funding:

Agency Name _____ Funding Amount

The private contractor is paying 100% of the cost of this operation. The contractor will sell the lumber to a local mill for processing.

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name _____ Type of Responsibility

N/A

11. List of Agencies Contacted during Preparation of the EA:

MT Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MT Natural Heritage Program

Part II. Environmental Checklist Review

1. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<u>IMPACTS</u>					
	Unknown *	No significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u>						
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other: _____						

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (Continued)

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
2. AIR					
Will the proposed action result in:					
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality?		X			2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X			2b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?	X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?	X				
e. Other: _____					

2 a. & b.) Emissions from the operation of the logging equipment would contain some pollutants and odors. The impact will be minor and temporary and end upon completion of the project.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No Significant Impact	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
3. <u>WATER</u>					
Will the proposed action result in:					
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?	X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?	X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?	X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?	X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?	X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?	X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?	X				
h. Increase in the risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?	X				
i. Violation of the Montana Non-Degradation Statute?	X				
j. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?	X				
k. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?	X				
l. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?	X				
m. Other: _____					

IMPACTS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be mitigated*	Comment Index
4. <u>VEGETATION</u>					
Will the proposed action result in:					
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?	X				4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?	X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plant species?	X				4c
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?	X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?	X				
f. Other: _____					

4a.) No significant impacts to vegetation are anticipated as no ground disturbance will occur, with the ground surface currently frozen and snow-covered. The harvested trees will be transported via existing access roads. Selective harvesting will be utilized, with only dead or infected trees removed.

4c.) A file search conducted by the Montana Natural Heritage Program indicated no threatened or endangered plant species are known to exist in the project area. Nine USFS/BLM plant species classified as sensitive are known to exist in the vicinity of Painted Rocks Reservoir; however the proposed project site is outside of the identified locations of these species. No significant impacts are anticipated to these sensitive plants as a result of the proposed action.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (Continued)

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
5. FISH/WILDLIFE					
Will the proposed action result in:					
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?	X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?	X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?	X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?	X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?	X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?	X				5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?	X				5g
h. Other: _____					

5f.) A file search conducted by the Montana Natural Heritage Program indicated the bull and westslope cutthroat trout are widely distributed throughout the region and could be found in streams around Painted Rocks Reservoir. Other listed species of special concern for this area include the Lynx, Wolverine, Fisher, Great Blue Heron, Pileated Woodpecker, and Western Toad. It is not anticipated that the project will have any impacts to these species. The project site is not in close proximity to any streams identified as potentially having the two trout species. No significant impacts are anticipated to any other threatened, endangered or species of special concern, or any other wildlife species.

5g.) No significant impacts are anticipated to wildlife populations in the area due to the short-term and temporary nature of the project.

2. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u>					
Will the proposed action result in:					
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X			6a
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X			6b
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?	X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?	X				
e. Other: _____					

6 a & b.) Noise levels will increase temporarily during the logging operation. The increased noise will be temporary and end upon project completion. It is not anticipated that any recreational visitors to the area will be impacted since the reservoir receives little recreational use during the winter months and there are no nearby residences or occupied cabins.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
<p>7. <u>LAND USE</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?</p> <p>b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?</p> <p>c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?</p> <p>d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?</p> <p>e. Increased regulatory restrictions on private property rights?</p> <p>f. Other: _____</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>				

IMPACTS

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
<p>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?</p> <p>b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?</p> <p>c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?</p> <p>d. Other: _____</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>			<p>8a.</p>

8a.) The refueling of logging equipment may pose a slightly increased risk of soil contamination resulting from a potential spill. A fuel containment tarp will be utilized to prevent fuel from reaching the ground should any spill occur. The risk of spills is slight, temporary and will end upon completion of the project. Potential impacts from a fuel spill at this site are minor and not significant due to the use of the containment tarp and the temporary nature of the project.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)**

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
<p>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACTS</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?</p> <p>b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?</p> <p>c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?</p> <p>d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?</p> <p>e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?</p> <p>f. Other: _____</p>	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)**

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
<p>10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/ TAXES/UTILITIES</u></p>					
<p>Will the proposed action:</p>					
<p>a. Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: <u>parks/recreational facilities</u></p>	X				
<p>b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?</p>	X				
<p>c. Result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?</p>	X				
<p>d. Result in increased use of any energy source?</p>	X				
<p>e. Other: _____</p>					

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)**

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
<p>11. <u>AESTHETICS/ RECREATION</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?</p> <p>b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?</p> <p>c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational opportunities and settings?</p> <p>d. Other: _____</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>			

11 a & c) The logging operation may temporarily affect the aesthetics of the area in the short-term. The quality of the recreational opportunities and setting may also be temporarily impacted. Recreational use of the area is very limited during the winter months. The effects would be minor, short-term and end with the completion of the project. The Zone A access would be through Painted Rocks State Park and a 20 foot section of a post and rail fence and several boulders used as vehicle barriers would be temporarily moved. The area would be signed to warn visitors about the logging operation. All affected park facilities would be returned to their original condition upon completion of the project. No short or long term impacts are anticipated.

3. SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

IMPACTS

Unknown*	No Significant Impacts	Minor Impacts*	Potentially Significant Impacts*	Can Impacts be Mitigated*	Comment Index
<p>13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:</p> <p>a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)</p> <p>b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?</p> <p>c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?</p> <p>d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?</p> <p>e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?</p> <p>f. Other: _____</p>		X			

13 a.) Short-term, temporary minor impacts may occur to air quality, noise, and the quality of the recreational opportunities and setting. All impacts will be negligible, minor, temporary and end with the completion of the project. A slightly increase risk involving potential fuel spills may be experienced. The risk is slight and the potential impacts minor and non-significant. No significant impacts are anticipated.

Part III. Alternatives and Evaluation

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

A. No action - Would prevent the removal of dead, dying or diseased trees, resulting in an economic loss and the increased risk of disease spreading to trees on adjacent private, Forest Service and State land. This would also negate the beneficial effect the logging operation would have on improving wildlife habitat and the local economy.

B. Proceed as planned with the project - This will have the beneficial effects of allowing the harvesting of dead timber in an economically sound manner with very minor, temporary and short-term environmental impacts, along with the utilization of the timber for a beneficial, local use. The potential impacts to the project site are non-significant, minor, temporary and will end with the completion of the project.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

All impacts cited are non-significant, temporary and minor.

3. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES / NO If an EIS is not required, explain why.

The EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

Because of the short-term, minor, non-significant and temporary nature of the actual impacts associated with this project and the beneficial effects to forest health, wildlife habitat, and the local economy, an EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this project.

4. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The public will be notified by way of a public notice on DNRC web page at www.dnrc.mt.gov . Individual notices will be sent to the State Water Projects Bureau standard EA distribution list (as presented on the cover page of this EA) and to those that have requested a copy. This is an appropriate level of public involvement considering the minor, temporary, short-term and non-significant impacts of the environmental issues associated with the project.

5. Duration of comment period if any: Copies of the EA can be obtained from the address listed below.

6. Name, title, addresses and telephone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:

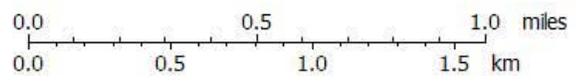
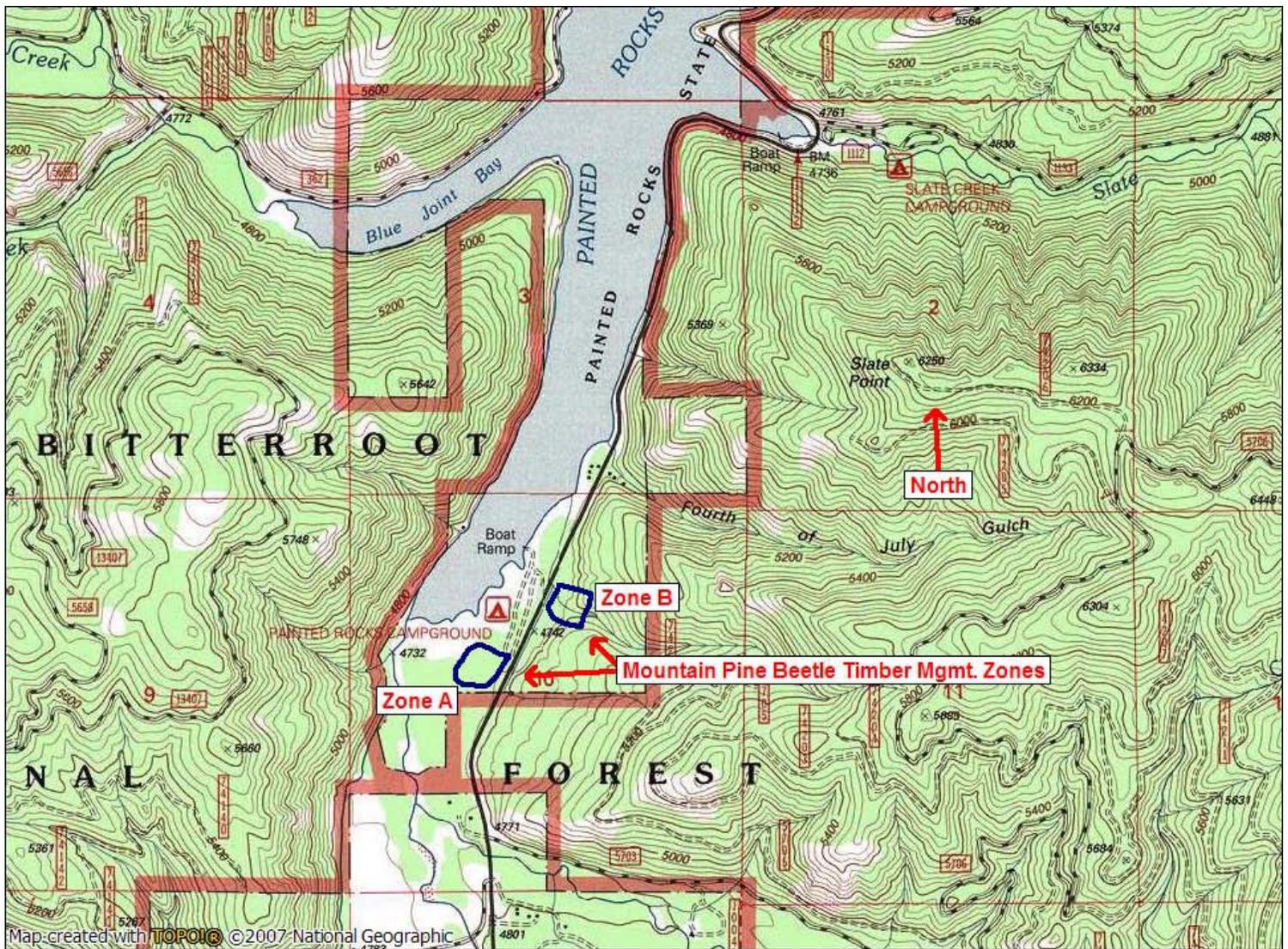
James P. Domino, Environmental Science Specialist, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Water Resources Division, State Water Projects Bureau, 1424 9th Ave., P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601, (406) 444-6622. e-mail - jdomino@state.mt.us.

Part IV. Narrative Evaluation and Comment

The project as proposed would not have any significant impacts. The impacts associated with the tree harvesting would be short-term and end with the completion of the project. Potential impacts associated with equipment refueling would be very minimal and non-significant. Potential impacts to the quality of the recreational experience, and impacts associated with increased noise levels and equipment emissions will be minor, temporary and end upon completion of the project. Significant impacts to recreationists are not anticipated as winter use of the area is very slight. No impacts to wildlife, plant or animal species of special of special concern or cultural resources are anticipated. Any disturbed areas and/or facilities would be returned to their original condition as they existed prior to the project. The benefits of this project, including the removal of diseased trees, the enhancement of wildlife habitat, and helping the local economy outweigh any minor short-term, non-significant and temporary impacts.

Appendix A - Vicinity and Satellite Maps and Project Location Photographs





Mountain Pine Beetle Timber Management Zones – Painted Rocks Reservoir



Zone A Typical Stand Composition



Zone A Existing Access Road



Zone B Existing Access Road



Zone B Typical Stand Composition



Infected tree