

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Test Permit – Farm - to - Market Gravel
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	2011
<b>Proponent:</b>	Libby Unit, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
<b>Location:</b>	Sec. 36, T30N, R31W (SW4NW4, SE4NE4, SE4, W2SW4)
<b>County:</b>	Lincoln

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Dig approximately 6 random test holes, each approximately 12 ft. wide and 12 ft. deep, with mechanized, heavy equipment. From each test hole, approximately 5 gallons of material would be removed. Samples would be taken off-site to determine the feasibility for future gravel pit development as a potential source of revenue for the Common Schools Trust. Each test hole would then be filled back in, and grass seed would be applied to the disturbed area.

### 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.*

No public scoping was done for this project. In the past, Libby Unit has never had any comment on this type of project. Those involved in the project development from DNRC include: Garrett Schairer, wildlife biologist, Marc Vessar, hydrologist and soil specialist; Dave Marsh, project leader; and Mark Peck, Decision Maker.

#### 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.*

Not Applicable

#### 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 – Current land management activities would continue. No test holes would be dug, and the feasibility for future gravel pit development, as a potential source of revenue to the Common Schools Trust, would remain unknown.

Action – Random, test holes (approximately 6 total) would be mechanically dug to determine the feasibility for future gravel pit development as a potential source of revenue to the Common Schools Trust. Holes would be filled back in after samples were removed. Disturbed areas would then be grass seeded.

### 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.*

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#### **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 area described above (*Location*) contains landform and soils characteristic of landtypes 101, 102, 103 and 106 from the *Soil Survey of Kootenai National Forest Area, Montana and Idaho (USDA, 1995)*. These landtypes are comprised of alluvial, lacustrine and glacial outwash terraces along floodplains and streams. The soils developed in alluvial deposits would be very well drained due to the coarse materials. Percolation in glacial outwash and lacustrine deposits would be expected to vary greatly as the material varies from fine silts to coarser gravels and cobble.

No impacts would be associated with the No Action Alternative. Soil impacts associated with the Action Alternative include reduced productivity on less than 0.02 acres of classified forest land. The reduced productivity would be a result of mixing of the less productive subsoils with the surface soils. Due to the small scale of this test project, additional cumulative effects from this action would be very low and likely immeasurable.

Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP) would be incorporated where applicable. Mechanized heavy equipment, such as an excavator, would be used to dig random, test holes. Contents from the holes would be assessed.

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#### **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.*

The only surface water features located in the project area is Libby Creek. All proposed test-hole locations would be more than 600 feet from the terrace edge overlooking Libby Creek. Additionally, the project area is on a generally flat terrain which would limit the potential for sediment movement over long distances.

No water quality impacts would be associated with the No Action Alternative. No direct, indirect or cumulative water quality impacts would be expected as a result of the Action Alternative due to (1) the limited surface water features in the project area, (2) the gentle terrain at the test-hole locations, and (3) distance from surface water features.

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#### **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.*

No impacts would occur.

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#### **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.*

During a search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database, no vascular plant species of special concern were found within the project area.

To assure protection of sensitive plant species, the Montana Administrative Rules for Forest Management; Biodiversity and Silviculture as well as RMS for Sensitive Species would be implemented where applicable.

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## **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.*

The proposed project area includes winter range for white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, and moose. Proposed activities could disturb big game on these winter ranges should activities occur during the late winter period, but the disturbance would be of short duration. No appreciable changes to available habitats would be anticipated with the proposed activities. No appreciable changes to the limited snag resources in the project area would be anticipated with the proposed activities, thus limited changes to those species that rely on those habitat attributes. Overall, given the size of the anticipated area, the short duration, and the habitats present, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated to all wildlife species.

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## **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.*

The proposed project area is outside of the Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Ecosystem and "occupied habitat" area as mapped by grizzly bear researchers and managers to address increased sightings and encounters of grizzly bears in habitats outside of recovery zones (Wittinger 2002). Although periodic use of the project area is possible, extensive use would not be anticipated. The proposed project area does not contain any Canada lynx habitats and the project area is generally outside of the elevations where lynx are found in Montana. The proposed project area is approximately 7 air miles from the annual home range for the Satire wolf pack. Wolves could move through the area and more extensive use is even possible. Proposed activities would be extremely short-lived, but could occur during the time period when wolves are using their dens or rendezvous sites. Wolves are most vulnerable to disturbance at den or rendezvous sites, thus disturbance to wolves could occur during the time of year when they are most vulnerable to disturbance. Thus there would be negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Canada lynx and grizzly bears and minor to moderate direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to gray wolves would be anticipated.

Some potential flammulated owl foraging habitats exists in the proposed project area and activities would alter a limited amount of those habitats. Similarly, some fisher and pileated woodpecker habitats exist in the proposed project area and could be altered with proposed activities. Slight disturbance to flammulated owls, pileated woodpeckers, and/or fisher would also be possible with the extremely short-lived activities proposed. Overall, minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated to flammulated owls, pileated woodpeckers, and fisher. Habitats for other sensitive species are either not present and or would not be affected with the proposed activities.

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## **10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

The DNRC archeologist was consulted prior to the Libby Story Timber Sale, and the finding was that impacts were expected to be minimal. No known sites would be impacted and it was unlikely that proposed activities would impact significant cultural properties. (Libby Story Timber Sale Checklist EA, 12/3/93). If evidence of artifacts is discovered before or during test hole digging, operations may be suspended to investigate and secure the site.

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## **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.*

Significant topographic features, terrain or aesthetic values would not be changed by the digging of test holes. There would be a temporary noise increase associated the operation of mechanized, heavy equipment.

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**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.*

No limited resources would be used from the project. There are no other activities nearby that would affect the project.

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**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 Farm – to - Market Timber Permit Categorical Exclusion Document (DNRC, Libby Unit – 1/24/2011)

Cumulative impacts would not be expected to occur.

<b>IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i></li><li>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i></li><li>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i></li></ul> |
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**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

Normal health risks associated with mechanized heavy equipment operation.

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

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

No impacts would occur.

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**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.*

No effects are expected relative to the employment market, from the digging of test holes.

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**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.*

No effects are expected relative to income tax revenue, from the digging of test holes.

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**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*

No effects are expected relative to government services, from the digging of test holes.

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**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 where applicable.

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**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.*

This project would not influence the recreation potential. There are no wilderness areas within the project area.

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**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.*

No effects are expected relative to population and housing, from the digging of test holes.

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

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

Native communities or lifestyles would not be disturbed.

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**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

Cultural uniqueness would not be disturbed.

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**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.*

No social and economic effects are expected from the digging of test holes.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Dave Marsh	<b>Date:</b> 2/28/2011
	<b>Title:</b> Forest Management Supervisor	

## V. FINDING

### 25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The Action Alternative is selected.

### 26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant impacts are expected. All projects are being conducted on sites previously reviewed through the timber sale planning process and all current resource management standards will be applied where applicable.

### 27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Mark Peck
	<b>Title:</b> Libby Unit Manager
<b>Signature:</b> /s/ Mark Peck	<b>Date:</b> 2/28/2011