

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION FOR DNRC FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Project Name: **Stillwater Olney Fuels Reduction Project; Forests in Focus**

Proposed Implementation Date: March 15, 2015

Proponent: Stillwater Logging Co., Inc. and Montana DNRC, Stillwater Unit

Type and Purpose of Action:

The proposed Forest in Focus Stillwater Olney Fuels Reduction Project is located in sections 17 and 18, Township 32 north, Range 23 west. Approximately 95 Mbf of saw timber and 200 tons of biomass would be removed from approximately 63 acres. All work would be completed using ground-based harvesting equipment. Work would be completed under standard soil moisture conditions, which is operating during periods of dry, frozen and/or snow covered ground.

Reducing the basal area of the stand would reduce fuel loads along Highway 93 North, BNSF Railroad, and the town of Olney. In addition it would thin an overcrowded stand, thus reducing competition and increasing the health and growth of the residual stand. The proposed treatment would retain trees of all size classes, thus maintaining the original diversity of the stand.

The entire 63 acres was analyzed under the Olney Urban Interface Timber Sale Project Checklist Environmental Assessment (2009) completed by the Stillwater Unit of DNRC; 28 acres of the current proposal were directly analyzed for harvest.

The Montana DNRC conducted public scoping for the Forests in Focus Grant Project as a whole by soliciting comments at four public meetings, (held in Forsythe, Billings, Missoula, and Kalispell), and by publishing requests for comments in the legal advertisement sections of the following newspapers: the Miles City Star, the Billings Gazette, the Missoulian (Missoula), and the Daily Interlake (Kalispell). No comments on the project as a whole were received either in writing or at the meetings.

According to ARM 36.11.447 (a), the project meets the criteria necessary to be nominated as a Categorically Excluded project.

Location: **T32N, R23W, S17 and 18** County: **Flathead**

Category (refer to ARM 36.11.447 for additional detail):

- _____ 1) Temporary Uses of Land with Negligible Effects
- _____ 2) Plans and Policies
- _____ 3) Leases and Licenses
- _____ 4) Acquisition of Land or Interest in Land
- _____ 5) Road Maintenance and Repair
- _____ 6) Bridges and Culverts
- _____ 7) Crossing Class 3 Streams
- _____ 8) Temporary Road Use Permits
- _____ 9) Road Closure
- _____ 10) Material Stockpiles
- _____ 11) Backfilling
- _____ 12) Gathering Forest Products for Personal Use
- _____ 13) Regeneration
- _____ 14) Nursery Operations
- _____ 15) Water Wells
- _____ 16) Herbicides and Pesticides
- _____ 17) Other Hazardous Materials
- _____ 18) Fences
- _____ 19) Waterlines

- 20) Removal of Small Trees
- 21) Removal of Hazardous Trees
- 22) Cone Collection
- 23) Timber Harvest (<100 MBF green or 500 MBF salvage)

By process of the adoption of the Administrative Rules for Forest Management on February 27, 2003, pursuant to ARM 36.2.523(5)(a), the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Trust Land Management Division, has adopted the above categorical exclusions for activities conducted on state forest lands. "Categorical Exclusion" refers to a type of action that does not individually, collectively, or cumulatively require an EA or EIS unless extraordinary circumstances occur (ARM 36.2.522(5)).

Extraordinary Circumstances:

Will the proposed action affect one or more of the following resources or situations in the project area? If the resource or situation is present, but project design avoids potential adverse effects on the resource, the answer is "no". One "Yes" answer indicates that Categorical Exclusion is not appropriate for the project, and an EA or EIS must be conducted.

- | YES | NO | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 1) Sites with high erosion risk. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 2) Federally listed threatened and endangered species or critical habitat for threatened and endangered species as designated by the USFWS. * |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 3) Municipal watersheds. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 4) The SMZ of fish bearing streams or lakes, except for modification or replacement of bridges, culverts and other crossing structures. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 5) State natural area. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 6) Native American religious and cultural sites. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 7) Archaeological sites. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 8) Historic properties and areas. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 9) Several related projects that individually may be subject to categorical exclusion but that may occur at the same time or in the same geographic area. Such related actions may be subject to environmental review even if they are not individually subject to review. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 10) Violations of any applicable state or federal laws or regulations. |

*Endangered species are present in the project area but the wildlife biologist has determined: "The potential for effects to threatened and endangered species is relatively low and overall minor effects to wildlife would be anticipated. None of the extraordinary circumstances listed under ARM 36.11.447 (2) (b) and (i) affecting the wildlife resources would preclude the use of a categorical exclusion for this proposal."

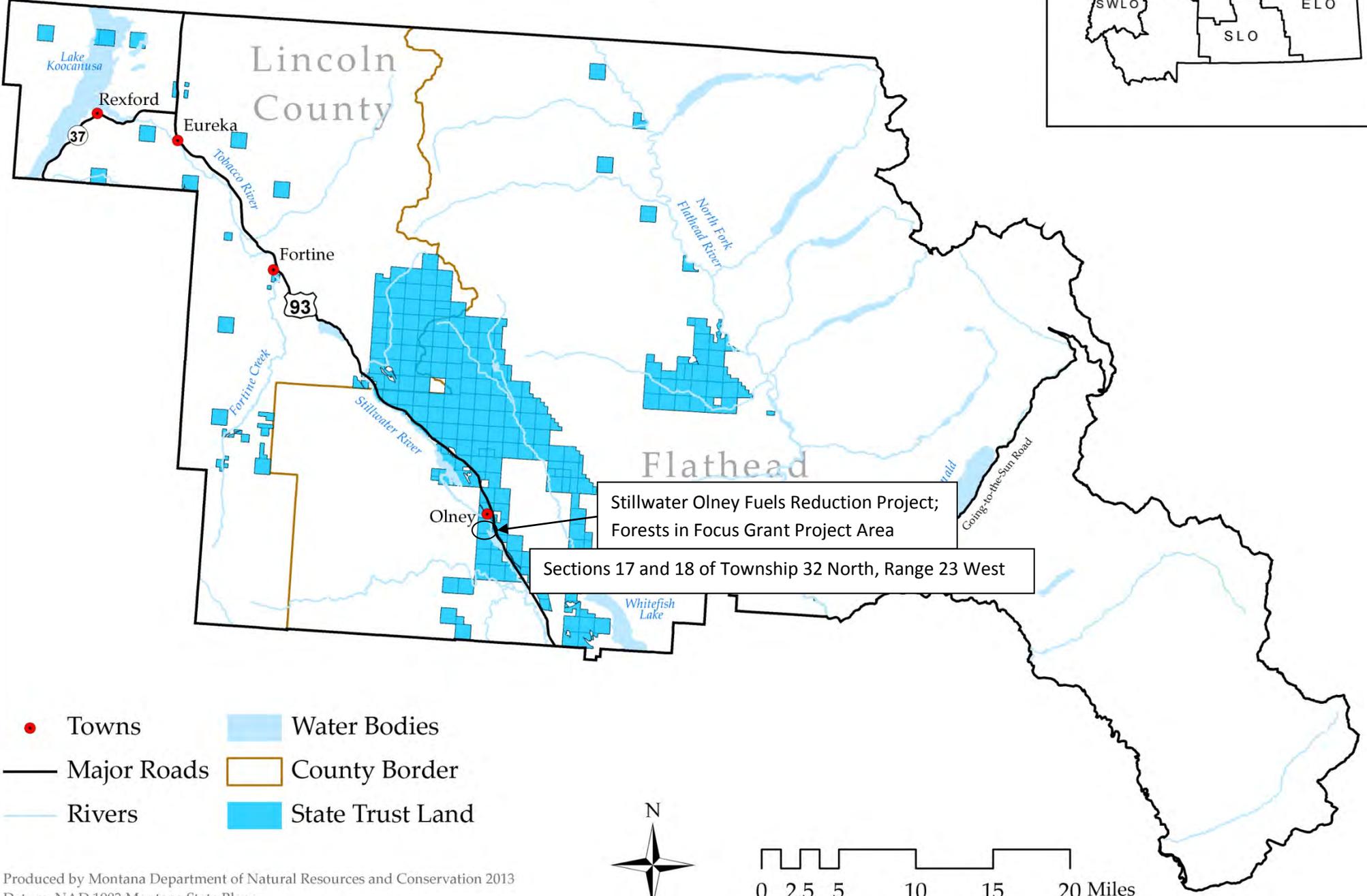
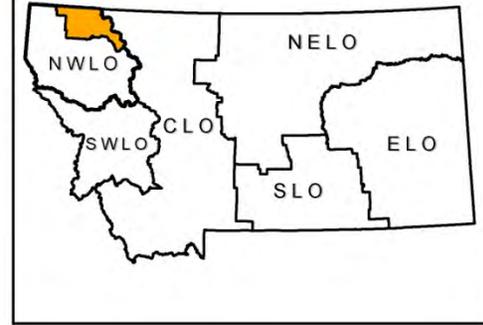
The project listed above meets the definition of the indicated categorical exclusion, including specified conditions and extraordinary circumstances, as provided in the Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.447).

Prepared by: Elspeth Pevear 02/27/2015
 (Name) (Date)

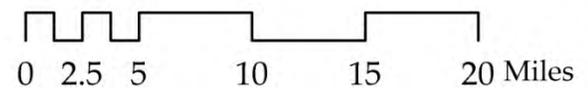
Decision by: Michael J McMahon Forest Management Supervisor
 (Name) (Title)

/s/ Michael J McMahon Feb. 27, 2015
 (Signature) (Date)

STILLWATER OLNEY FUELS REDUCTION PROJECT VICINITY MAP STILLWATER UNIT



- Towns
- Major Roads
- Rivers
- Water Bodies
- County Border
- State Trust Land



Stillwater Olney Fuels Reduction Project

Sections 17 & 18; T32N, R23W

Private Property

Legend

-  harvest treatment boundary
-  previously thinned area
-  Class 1 streams



520 260 0 520 Feet



Unit 1	43 acres	Improvement cut
Unit 2	20 acres	Improvement cut

Lower Stillwater Lake