

**SWAN RIVER STATE FOREST
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
CONSERVATION**

WOOD LION MULTIPLE TIMBER SALE PROJECT PROPOSAL

February 9th, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Swan River State Forest, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is proposing the Wood Lion Multiple Timber Sale Project Proposal. This project would consist of multiple timber sales that would be sold and harvested over several years. This notice is to inform the public about this proposed project and provide an opportunity to become involved at the initial stage of project development.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The gross sale area is located in Lake County approximately 7 air miles south of Swan Lake, MT in the Swan River State Forest. It covers approximately 19,540 acres of state trust lands in and adjacent to Whitetail, Woodward, South Woodward, Fatty, Goat, and Squeezer Creek drainages. Harvesting could occur on approximately 5 to 20 percent of the gross sale area.

- In Township 23 North, Range 17 West it includes Sections: 20, 28, 30, 34, 35, and 36.
- In Township 23 North, Range 18 West it includes Sections: 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 32, 33, 35, and 36.
- In Township 24 North, Range 18 West it includes Sections: 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 34, and 35.

PROJECT PARAMETERS

Swan River State Forest plans timber sale projects in accordance with The Swan Valley Grizzly Bear Conservation Agreement (SVGBCA), which allows for green timber sales in a bear subunit for 3 years at a time on a rotating basis. The Wood Lion project area is primarily located within the Porcupine/Woodward and Lion Creek Subunits, which are open from 2018 through 2020.

Lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of Common Schools. The State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) and DNRC are required by law to administer these lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long term for these beneficiary institutions, as required in *Section 77-1-202, Montana Codes Annotated (MCA)*.

DNRC will manage the lands involved in this project according to the philosophy and standards described in the *State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP)*, which states:

“Our premise is that the best way to produce long-term income for the trust is to manage intensively for healthy and biologically diverse forests. Our understanding is that a diverse forest

is a dynamic forest that will produce the most reliable and highest long-term revenue stream... In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be DNRC's primary source of revenue and primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives."

The project design will follow *Montana's Administrative Rules for Forest Management (Annotated Rules of Montana 36.11.401 through 36.11.450)*.

In December 2011, the Land Board approved the *Record of Decision (ROD)* for the *Montana DNRC Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)*. Approval of the ROD was followed by the issuance of an *Incidental Take Permit* by the United States Fish Wildlife Service (USFWS). DNRC will manage the HCP –covered lands involved in this project in accordance with the HCP.

In December of 2012, DNRC completed the acquisition of additional lands scattered throughout the proposed project area. Management of these lands is additionally affected by conservation easements held by the Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks under the Swan Valley Conservation Project Multi-resource Management Plan.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of this project are to:

- promote biodiversity by moving forest stands toward historic coertype conditions and species composition;
- improve forest health and productivity by addressing insect and disease issues;
- generate revenue to the Common Schools trust for funding kindergarten through grade 12 public education and to benefit local economies;
- contribute sufficient volume towards DNRC's annual sustained yield target of 56.9 million board feet (MMbf) as required by state law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) while incorporating and meeting important ecological commitments;
- develop and improve the transportation system and infrastructure for long-term management, fire suppression, and public access;
- improve water quality by removing and rehabilitating sediment point sources, and meet *Best Management Practices (BMPs)* on all project roads, including haul routes to Highway 83; and
- reduce fuel loads and wildfire hazards by decreasing ground and ladder fuel loads.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Swan River State Forest is in the initial stages of developing this project and is seeking public comment regarding concerns or issues for this proposed timber harvest. In accordance with the *Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)*, public input regarding the project will be used to identify specific issues, define analyses, guide alternative development, and shape project development of the individual timber sales.

DNRC plans to assemble an Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) of specialists (wildlife biologists, hydrologists, foresters, etc.) to evaluate the initial public input and to complete an *Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS) on the potential environmental effects of this proposal.

If requested, public meetings and/or field tours may be held as the project progresses.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS

The comment period will remain open until March 10th, 2016. You may submit comments to Nick Aschenwald, Management Forester, Swan River State Forest, via mail (34925 MT Highway 83, Swan Lake, MT, 59911), phone (406-754-2301), fax (406-754-2884), or e-mail at naschenwald@mt.gov.

We would also like to know the best way to keep you or your organization informed and actively involved throughout the project development and analysis period. Please inform us if a particular type of communication is preferable.

If you do not wish to comment at this time, but would like to remain informed of the status of this project, fill out and return the enclosed form. If you do not respond, further documentation regarding the proposed Wood Lion Multiple Timber Sale Project Proposal will not be sent to you.

Thank you for your interest in the management of state trust lands.

I do not have concerns or comments at this time, but would like to stay involved in the process of project development.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

eMail: _____

Please send completed form to arrive by March 10th, 2016.

Swan River State Forest
c/o Nick Aschenwald
34925 MT Highway 83
Swan Lake, MT 59911

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