

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Central Land Office - Bozeman



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STATE OF MONTANA

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DRAFT RECORD OF DECISION Limestone West Timber Sale Project January 7, 2019

INTRODUCTION

I have reviewed all the information and comments received during the preparation of the Limestone West Timber Sale Project. I have reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), including comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and the responses to those comments as presented in the FEIS. I have compared the alternatives to the project objectives and evaluated their advantages and disadvantages. I have reviewed each identified issue and the analysis of environmental effects for each alternative displayed in the FEIS. I have carefully compared the Proposed Decision with philosophy and direction contained within Department policies, the State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP), the Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARMs), and the DNRC Forested Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan.

DECISION

I have chosen to implement a modified Action Alternative A, as described in the FEIS PROPOSED DECISION (*FEIS, Chapter II, pages 73 through 79*). The modified Action Alternative A would implement all recommended mitigations in the Limestone West Timber Sale FEIS. With the selection of modified Action Alternative A, a conservation license option with a term length of 25-years will also be offered for bid. This alternative was analyzed as Action Alternative C in the DEIS with modifications to the term length made from 10-years (DEIS) to 25-years (FEIS) based on public comment and growth and yield conditions of the current forest stands.

Under Modified Alternative A, total new road construction would be reduced from 9 miles to 6.7 miles and new administratively open roads in Action Alternative A would be reduced from 5.3 miles to 2.8 miles, terminating in the northwest corner of Harvest Unit C6. All other road prisms would remain, but would be reclaimed by debris closure at the completion of the project. This change would eliminate any administratively open road in Section 9, T3S, R6E and most road in the southwest ¼ of section 4, T3S, R6E. Roads of concern to Montana FWP and the public would be reclaimed in a manner that would make non-motorized recreational public access much more difficult and would provide greater security for wildlife.

The modified Action Alternative A meets the PURPOSE AND NEED for the proposed action and PROJECT OBJECTIVES (*FEIS Chapter I, page 1*) as displayed within the FEIS PROPOSED DECISION. The proposed mitigations are adequate and feasible. In addition, modified Action Alternative A complies with the philosophy of the SFLMP and all department policies, state laws, and administrative rules.

Overall, Modified Action Alternative A strikes the best balance between protecting ecological values, addressing insect and disease problems, developing a transportation system and reducing fire hazard while generating revenue for the Trust. Modified Action Alternative A earns \$31,475 more in total trust revenue than Action Alternative B. Stands with the greatest amounts of mortality are identified for harvest with treatments that best provide for long-term forest health and vigor. Modified Action Alternative A treats 101 more acres of stands that are moderate to high-risk to insect and disease than does Action Alternative B. Because of the above-mentioned reasons, Modified Action Alternative A best complies with the Department's legal requirement to manage these lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the trust

beneficiaries.

The complete rationale for choosing the modified Action Alternative A is displayed in the FEIS Proposed Decision (*FEIS, Chapter II, pages 73 through 79*).

Upon execution of this Decision, I will recommend that the Limestone West Timber Sale contract be submitted to the Board of Land Commissioners for approval. If approved, the timber sale and associated conservation license will be advertised for sale for a period of 30-days. At the completion of the advertisement, sealed bids will be opened and a Final Record of Decision will be published notifying the public the outcome of the bidding process.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Craig Campbell
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