

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**  
**DNRC FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES ON STATE TRUST LANDS**

Project Name: Upper Grasshopper Valley Timber Permit & Fuels Reduction

Proposed Implementation Date: Summer 2025 – Fall 2030

Proponent: MT DNRC – Dillon Unit

Proposed Action: This proposal includes fuel reduction through conifer removal on approximately 465 acres and timber harvest on roughly 85 acres, along with 2.5 miles of road maintenance. To promote rangeland vigor and reduce hazardous fuels, juniper and sub-merchantable Douglas-fir trees under 15" DBH would be removed in lop-and-scatter units, while those under 10" DBH would be removed in cut-and-pile units. The project includes approximately 400 acres of lop-and-scatter treatment and 65 acres of cut-and-pile treatment on state land. Timber harvest treatments may include overstory removal and sanitation prescriptions in Douglas-fir and Spruce sawtimber stands impacted by insects and disease, with an estimated harvest of 200 MBF on approximately 85 acres. Slash piles will be burned during the winter months when conditions are safe.

Beaverhead County's draft Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan (CWPP) and the DNRC MTFAP designate this area as a high wildfire-risk area. This proposal aims to reduce wildfire risk, protect community infrastructure, restore resilient landscapes, and enhance public awareness and firefighter safety to the Upper Grasshopper Valley.

The primary objectives for the proposed project are to:

- Contribute to the annual targets of timber harvest volumes of DNRC and the Central Land Office. DNRC is required by state law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) to sell approximately 57.6 million board feet (MMbf) of timber annually and produce revenue over time.
- Reduce wildlife risk through fuels reduction treatments in areas where increased tree mortality from insect & disease outbreaks occurred, as well as conifer encroachment in rangelands.
- Capture the diminishing value of dying and dead timber.
- Generate revenue for the Common Schools Trust.
- Create a fire-adapted habitat and ecosystem.
- Reduce fuel loading, fire severity and negative impacts in the event of an uncontrolled wildfire.

A project scoping notice was sent to individuals and organizations likely to have an interest in the proposal and project area. Notices were sent out on February 20, 2025. The comment deadline was March 20, 2025.

No comments were received.

Legal Description: Sections 04, 09, & 16 T5S, R12W

County: Beaverhead

Specialists Consulted: Jeff Schmalenberg

**Category (refer to ARM 36.11.447 (3)(a) through (x) for additional detail):**

- a) ☐ Minor temporary uses of land involving negligible or no disturbance of soil or vegetation and having no long-term effects on the environment.
- b) ☐ Plans or modifications of plans that would not predetermine future Department action affecting the physical or biological environment.
- c) ☐ Issuance, renewal, or assignment of leases or licenses where the use will remain the same.
- d) ☐ Acquisition of fee title, easements, rights of way or other interests in land.
- e) ☒ Road maintenance and repair of existing roads.
- f) ☐ Reconstruction or modification to an existing bridges or replacement of a culvert.
- g) ☐ Crossing Class III Streams in accordance with the SMZ law.
- h) ☐ Issuing a Temporary Road Use Permits on existing roads.
- i) ☐ Road closure to motorized public and/or administrative use.
- j) ☐ Removal of material stockpiles.
- k) ☐ Backfilling into previously excavated land with compatible material.
- l) ☐ Gathering forest products for personal or commercial use i.e. firewood, Christmas trees or posts and rails.
- m) ☐ Regeneration of land through planting native trees, or other means, including site preparation, but that does not involve use of herbicides.
- n) ☐ Seed procurement, growing, lifting and distributing nursery stock.
- o) ☐ Drilling of water wells for domestic use or irrigation for lawns and gardens for existing cabin or home sites.
- p) ☐ Herbicide and pesticide treatments, using spot treatment less than 160 acres within a 640-acre section during the calendar year.
- q) ☐ Handling of hazardous materials for fire suppression or other purposes
- r) ☐ Fence construction of specific design specifications (noted in ARM).
- s) ☐ Installation of water pipelines waterlines to benefit grazing practices and range condition.
- t) ☒ Removal of trees less than two feet tall that are encroaching on range or non-commercial forest lands on up to 60 contiguous acres, not to exceed 160 acres.
- u) ☒ Removal of hazardous trees from structures, recreation areas and roads not to exceed 5,000 board feet.
- v) ☐ Cone Collection for reforestation purposes
- w) ☒ Timber Harvest (<500 MBF )
- x) ☒ Low-intensity forest management activities as defined in ARM 36.11.403(43) including: **(Please select what activity applies)**

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (a) timber inventory;                               |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (b) timber sale preparation;                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | (c) road location;                                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (d) road maintenance;                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | (e) bridge replacement;                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | (f) mechanical site preparation;                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | (g) tree planting;                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | (h) pre-commercial thinning;                        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (i) prescriptive and hazard reduction burning;      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (j) patrol of fall/winter slash burns;              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (k) heavy and non-heavy equipment slash treatments; |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (l) monitoring;                                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (m) data collection; and                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | (n) noxious weed management.                        |

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Trust Land Management Division has adopted the above categorical exclusions for activities conducted on state forested trust 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, species or situations in the project area? If the resource, species, 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"/> | a) Sites with high erosion risk.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b) 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"/> | c) Municipal watersheds.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d) 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"/> | e) State natural area.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f) Native American religious and cultural sites.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g) Archaeological sites.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h) Historic properties and areas.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i) 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.

☐☒

j) Violations of any applicable state or federal laws or regulations.


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

Prepared by: Michaela Kalinowski  
(Name)

06/10/2025  
(Date)

Decision by: Timothy Egan  
(Name)

Dillon Unit Manager  
(Title)

  
(Signature)

06/24/2025  
(Date)

# Upper Grasshopper Valley Timber Permit & Fuels Reduction



0 0.15 0.3 0.6 Miles

Scale: 1:30,000

## Sale Prep Polygons

Fuels Reduction

## Proposed Treatment Units

Overstory Removal

Sanitation

## MT Public Lands

Montana State Trust  
Lands

US Forest Service

