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TOP STORY

DNRC moving closer to decision on Bozeman logging project

By Michael Wright Chronicle Staff Writer Sep 6, 2018



The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation released a draft report that looked at three options for its Limestone West Timber Sale, a logging project that would take place within a 2,725-acre area of state trust lands on the front of the Gallatin Range.

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Montana officials are inching closer to a decision on a potential logging project south of Bozeman.



Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Bozeman Unit



Limestone West DEIS

Sep 5, 2018

More Information

The draft environmental impact statement is available for public viewing at http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/forest-management/limestone-west/limestone-west-environmental-documents/LimestoneWestTimberSale_DEIS_08312018_Website.pdf.

Public comments on the project can be submitted by email to limestonewest@mt.gov or by mail to Chuck Barone, Project Leader, ATT: Limestone West Timber Sale, Montana DNRC, 2273 Boot Hill Court, Suite 110, Bozeman, MT 59715.

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation released a draft report that looked at three options for its Limestone West Timber Sale, a logging project that would take place within a 2,725-acre area of state trust lands on the front of the Gallatin Range.

One option would call for up to 600 acres of logging and more than 9 miles of new roads. A second option would be limited to 373 acres of logging and 6.5 miles of new roads. Both options include fewer acres than the original proposal.

The report also analyzed the impact delaying any logging there for 10 years, a delay that could happen if opponents outbid timber companies for the sale. Save Our Gallatin Front, a coalition of nearby residents concerned about the impacts of potential logging, has reserved the right to bid on the sale.

DNRC officials are accepting public comments on the project until Oct. 30. They hope to make a final decision in November and bring the project to the Montana Land Board for approval in December.

Chuck Barone, the DNRC forester behind the project, said removing trees there could improve the health of the forest.

“It’s just a little overstocked in there. It’s a lot of overstocked depending on where you’re at,” Barone said.

But residents of the Triple Tree and Eagle Rock subdivisions, not far from the project area, are

concerned that logging would harm an area that supports a variety of wildlife. Jeff Yates, a nearby resident member of Save Our Gallatin Front, said moose are common there, and he worries timber harvest would disrupt their habitat.

“We believe this is a pretty pristine wildlife habitat that’s going to be destroyed, or it’s at least going to be changed for decades,” Yates said.

DNRC first proposed the Limestone West Timber Sale in 2016. It would take place entirely on trust lands, which the state tries to turn a profit from.

The analysis predicts the project will bring in between \$318,240 and \$462,438, depending on which alternative is chosen. Of that, between \$130,478 and \$189,600 would become trust revenue.

Save Our Gallatin Front formed shortly after the proposal first surfaced. The group has applied for a “conservation license in lieu of timber sale,” a rarely used procedure that will allow them to bid against timber companies should the sale go out for bids.

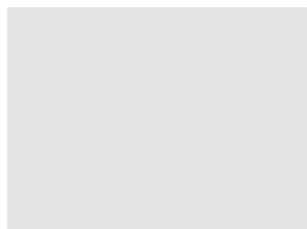
The environmental analysis indicates that DNRC envisions that license lasting for 10 years, which Yates said is much shorter than they’d hoped. He said they’re unsure if they’ll actually bid against the timber companies for a license that lasts only 10 years.

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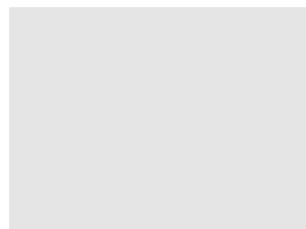
Michael Wright

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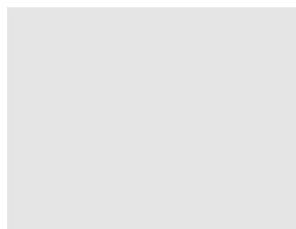
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