

# WESTERN MONTANA COOPERATIVE BIOLOGIST REPORT

DAVID NIKONOW

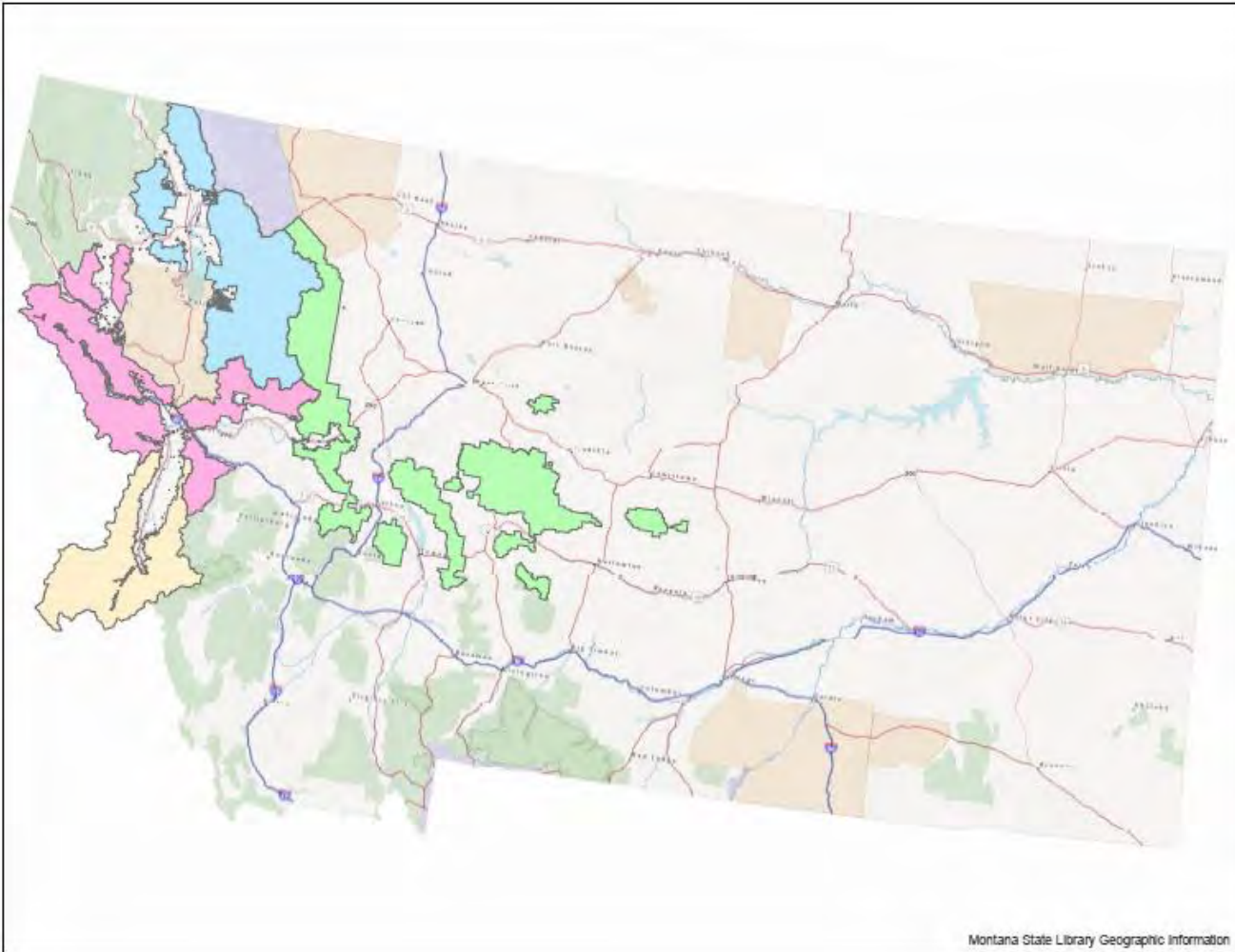
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UGBEP SPRING 2024 CAC MEETING

3/12/2024



The logo for "Healthy Habitats. Healthy Harvests.™" is located in the bottom right corner. It consists of the text "Healthy Habitats. Healthy Harvests.™" in a white, sans-serif font, set against a dark, semi-transparent rectangular background. The background of the entire slide is a close-up photograph of birch bark, showing its characteristic layered and peeling texture in various shades of brown and tan.



Montana State Library Geographic Information



National Wild Turkey Federation



**UPLAND GAME BIRD  
ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**  
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



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# PRIMARY DUTIES

- Provide technical assistance to Forest Service managers and specialists on projects before and during implementation to improve upland game bird habitat quality
- Fill USFS capacity voids to assure project analyses or implementation is completed on time
- Assist in grant writing to supplement implementation funding
- Assist in project planning during NEPA to assure projects benefit upland game bird habitat



# TARGET TREATMENT AREAS

- **Ponderosa Pine Savanna**

- Restore open forest conditions through conifer harvest and/or prescribed fire
- Removing overstocked Douglas fir understory
- Increased vigor of grasses and forbs which improves insect abundance for poult forage
- Increased growth of berry producing shrubs which provide fall and winter forage for ruffed grouse and wild turkeys



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# TARGET TREATMENT AREAS

- **Montane Grasslands and Shrublands**

- Often on south facing slopes
- Treatments include prescribed fire and thinning to reduce conifer encroachment on meadows and shrub fields
- This retains a high abundance of grasses and forbs which are critical for high insect populations improving summer forage for wild turkeys and dusky grouse
- Rx burning can also increase the abundance of soft mast producing shrubs for fall forage



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# TARGET TREATMENT AREAS

- **Aspen and Cottonwood Forest**

- Restore and enhance aspen stands through conifer removal with harvest, hand felling, or Rx fire
- Reduced competition for light and water along with site disturbance will increase suckering and enhance aspen quality
- Improves spring/summer forage and nesting habitat for wild turkeys and ruffed grouse
- Aspen forest types have extremely high levels of biodiversity including an abundance of insects which are critical for brood rearing



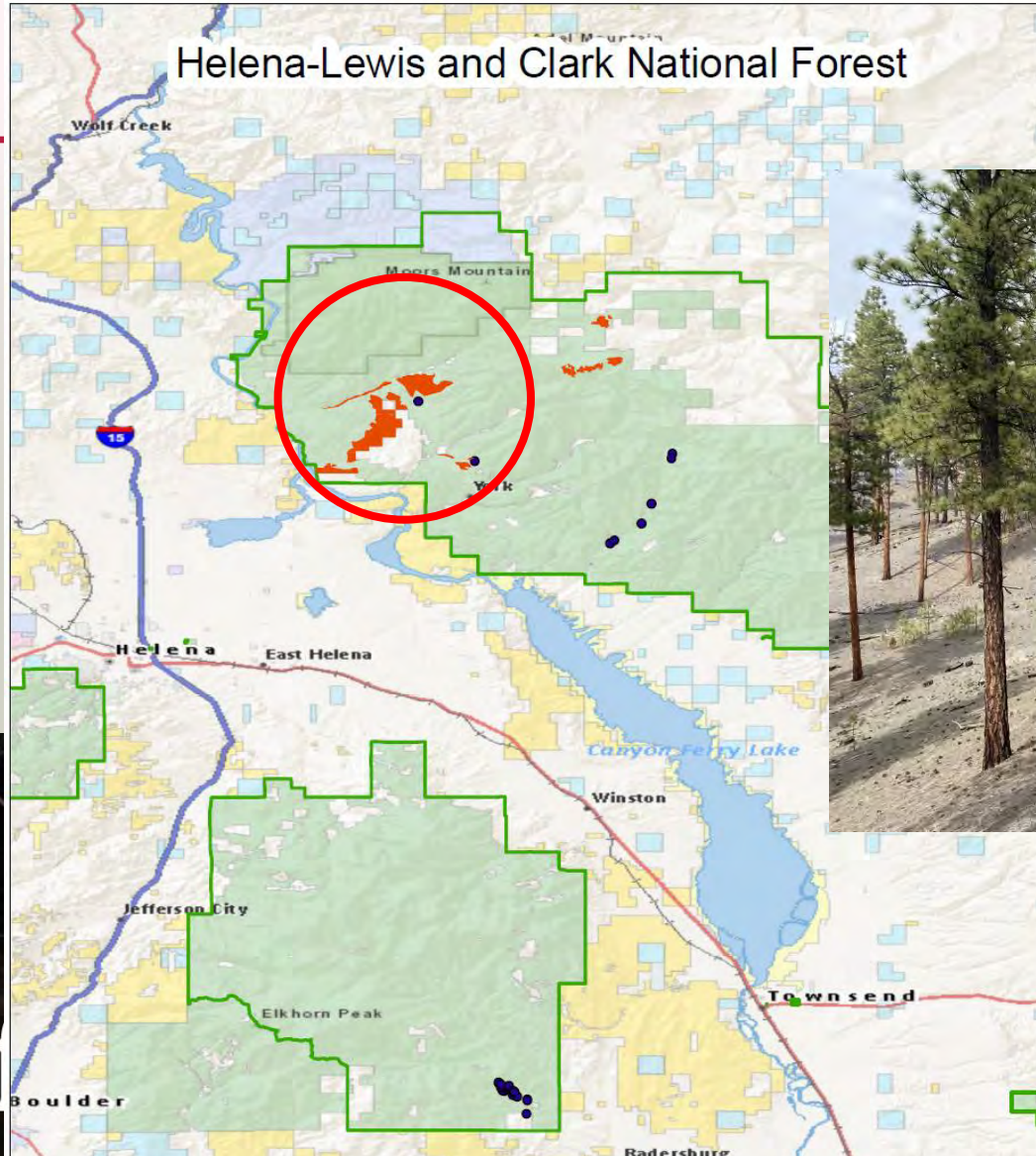


# PROJECT UPDATES

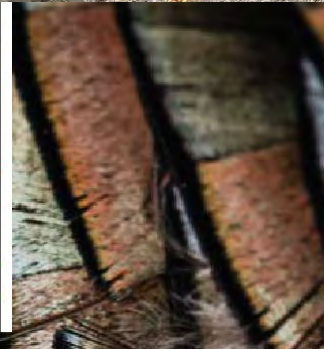


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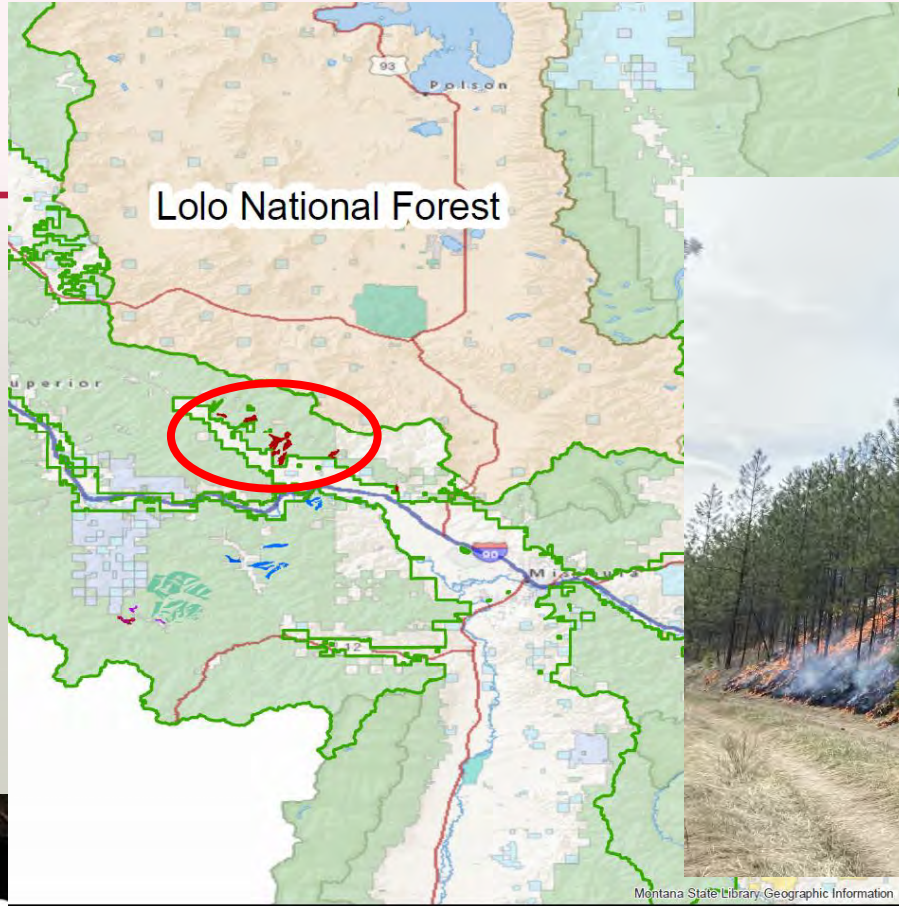
# HELENA – LEWIS & CLARK NATIONAL FOREST



- Beaver Soup/ Bull Sweats Rx Burning – 126 acres & counting



# LOLO NATIONAL FOREST



- Frenchtown Face RX Fire - 297 acres



# FRENCHTOWN FACE 19



Sept. 9, 2018



Sept. 24, 2018



August 1, 2022



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# FRENCHTOWN FACE 19



Sept. 19, 2018



Sept. 24, 2018

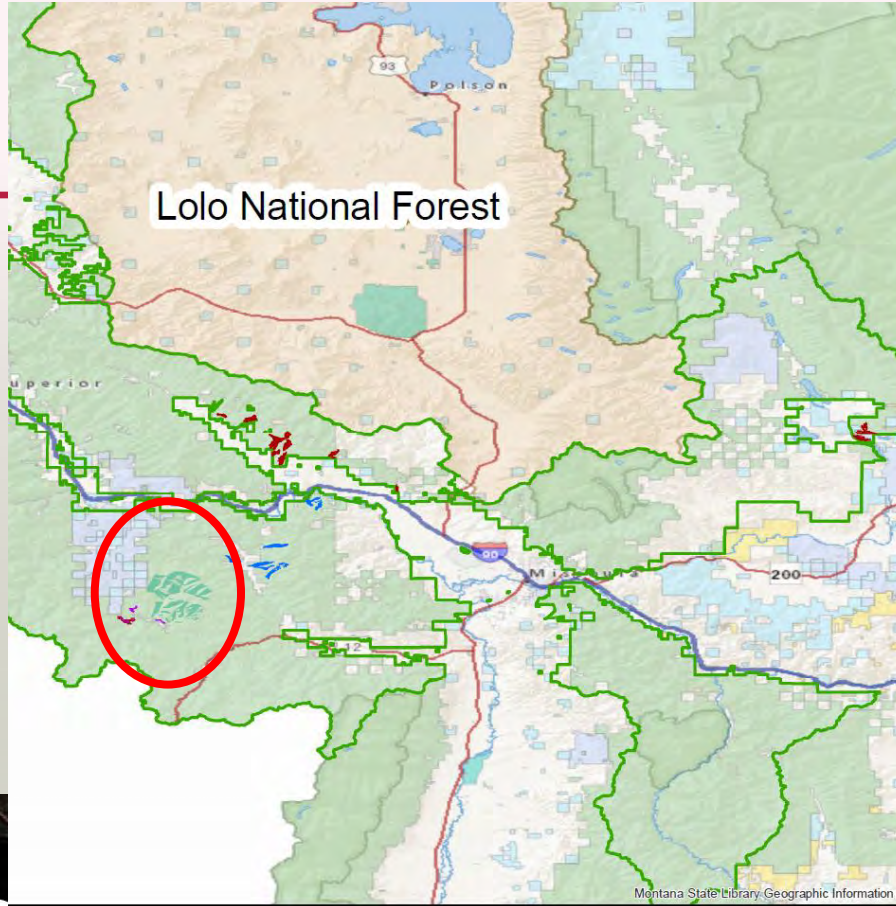


August 1, 2022



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# LOLO NATIONAL FOREST



- Frenchtown Face Rx Fire - 297 acres
- Burdette Creek MANAGED Fire - 158 acres



# LOLO NATIONAL FOREST

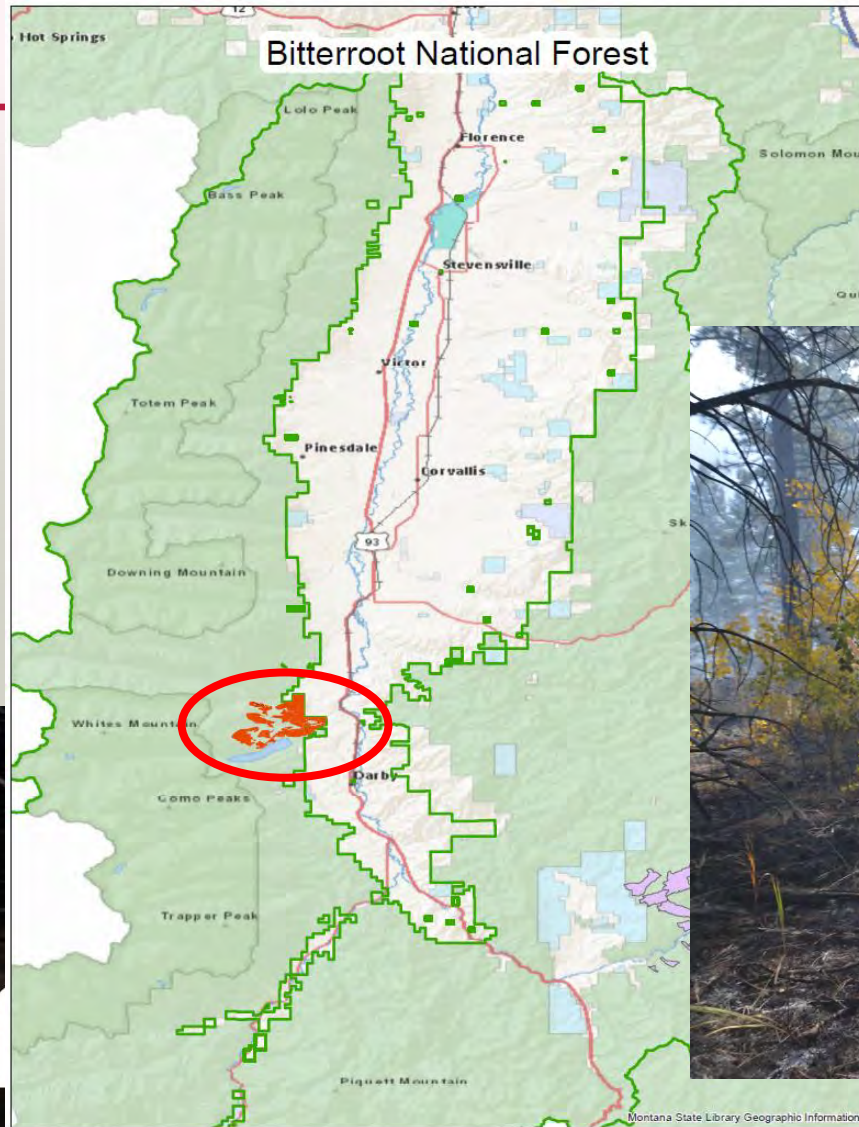


- Frenchtown Face Rx Fire - 244 acres
- Burdette Creek MANAGED Fire - 158 acres
- Horseshoe West/ Colt Summit Thinning and Rx Fire – 5 acres



# BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST

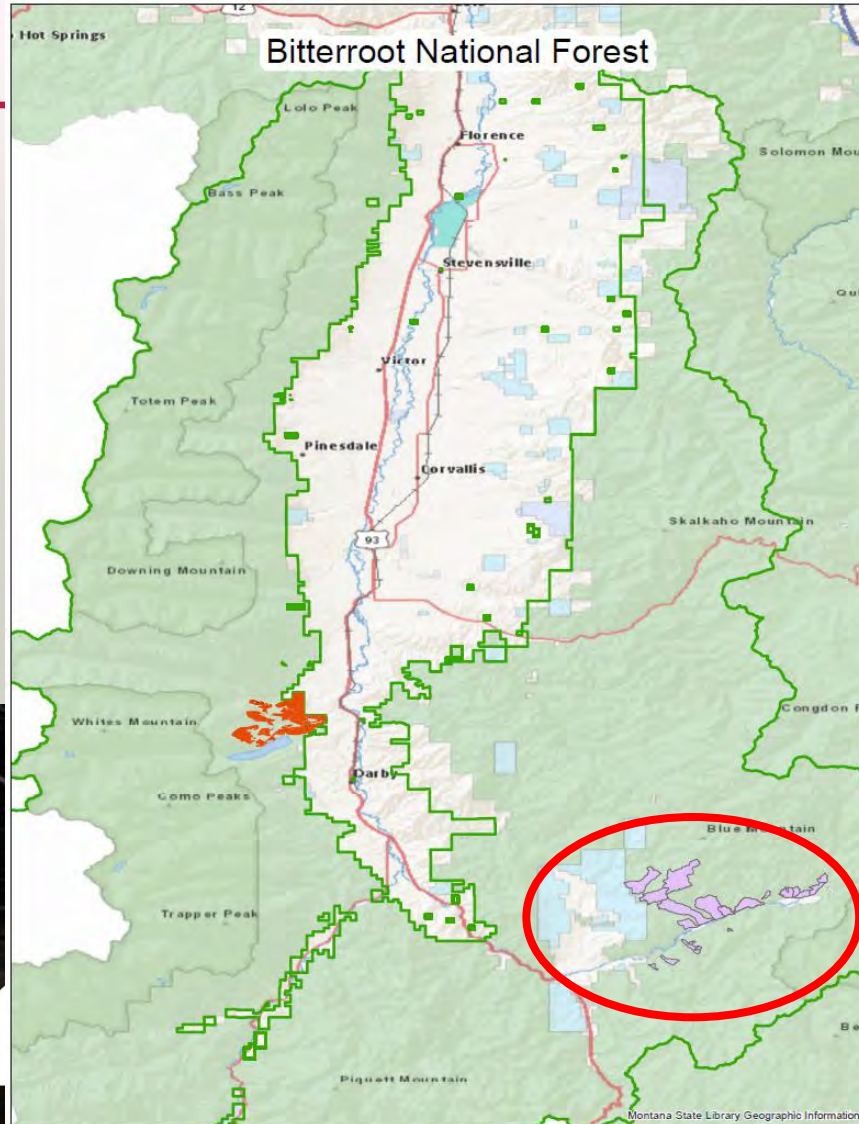
- Como Horselick Rx Burning and Thinning – 75 acres



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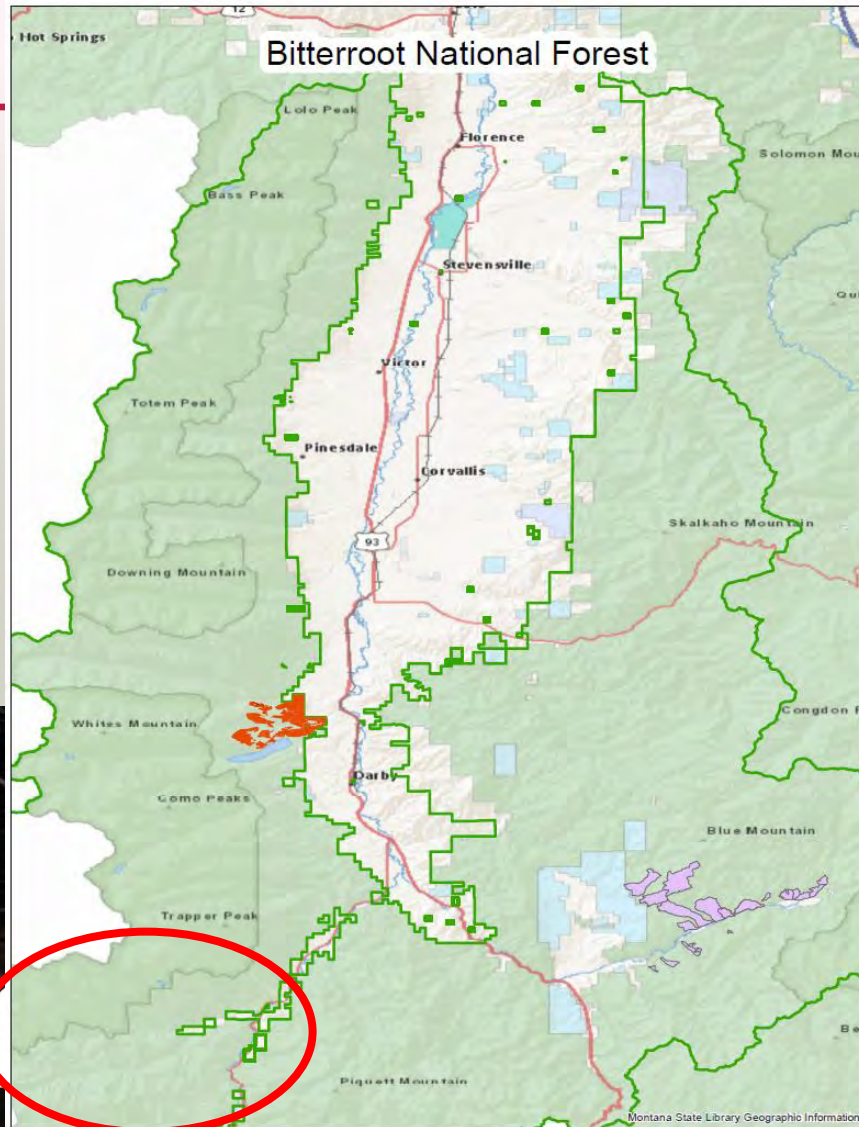
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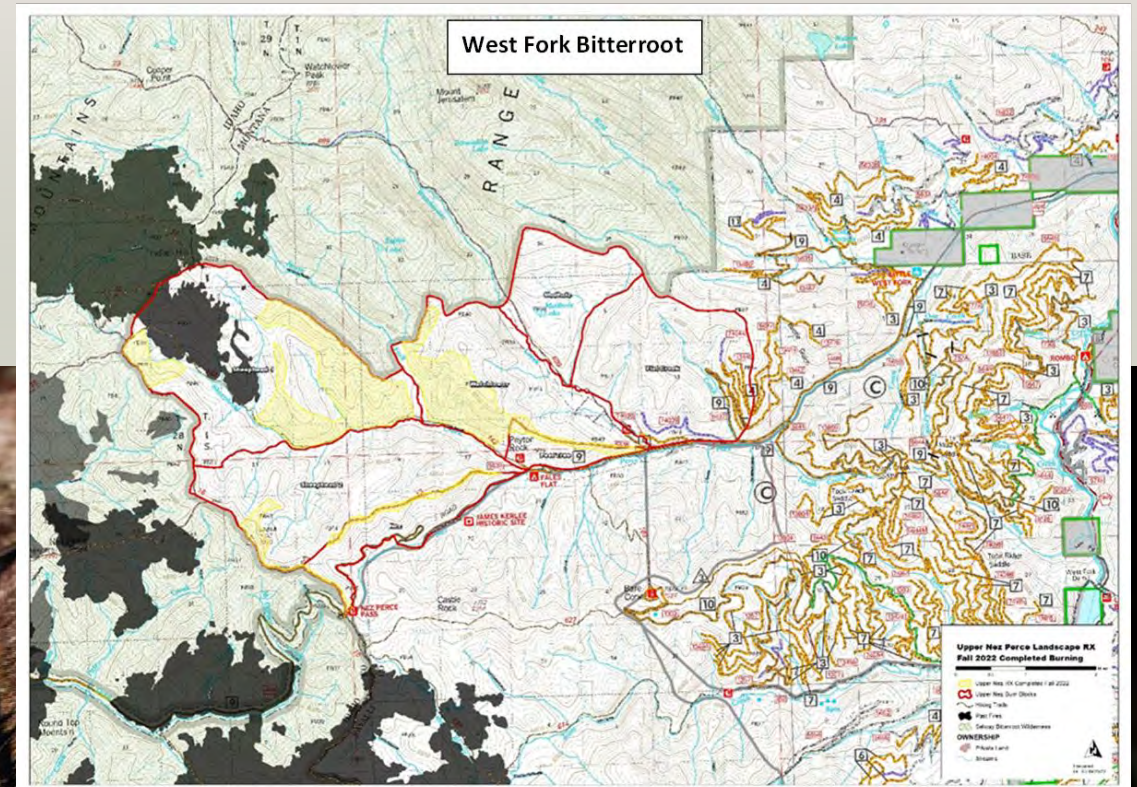
- Como Horselick Rx Burning and Thinning – 75 acres
- East Fork Bitterroot Rx Burning and Thinning – 1,237 acres



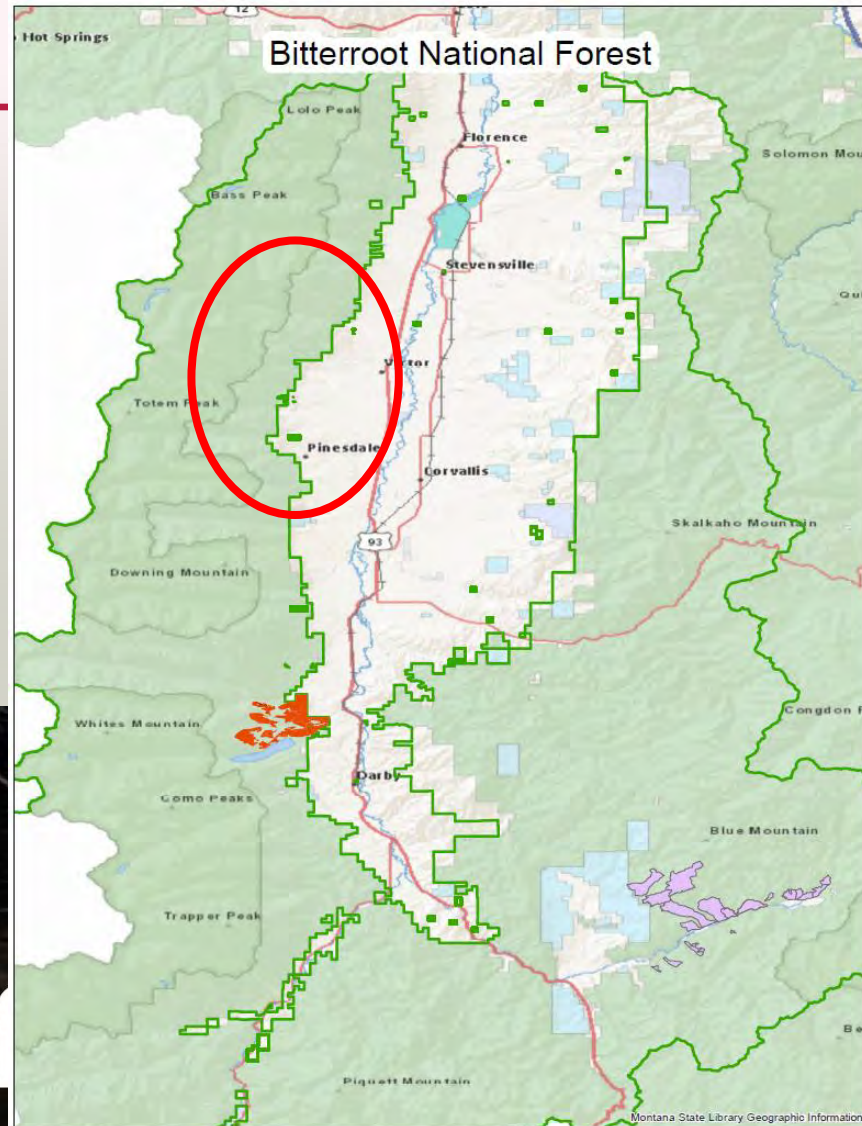
# BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST



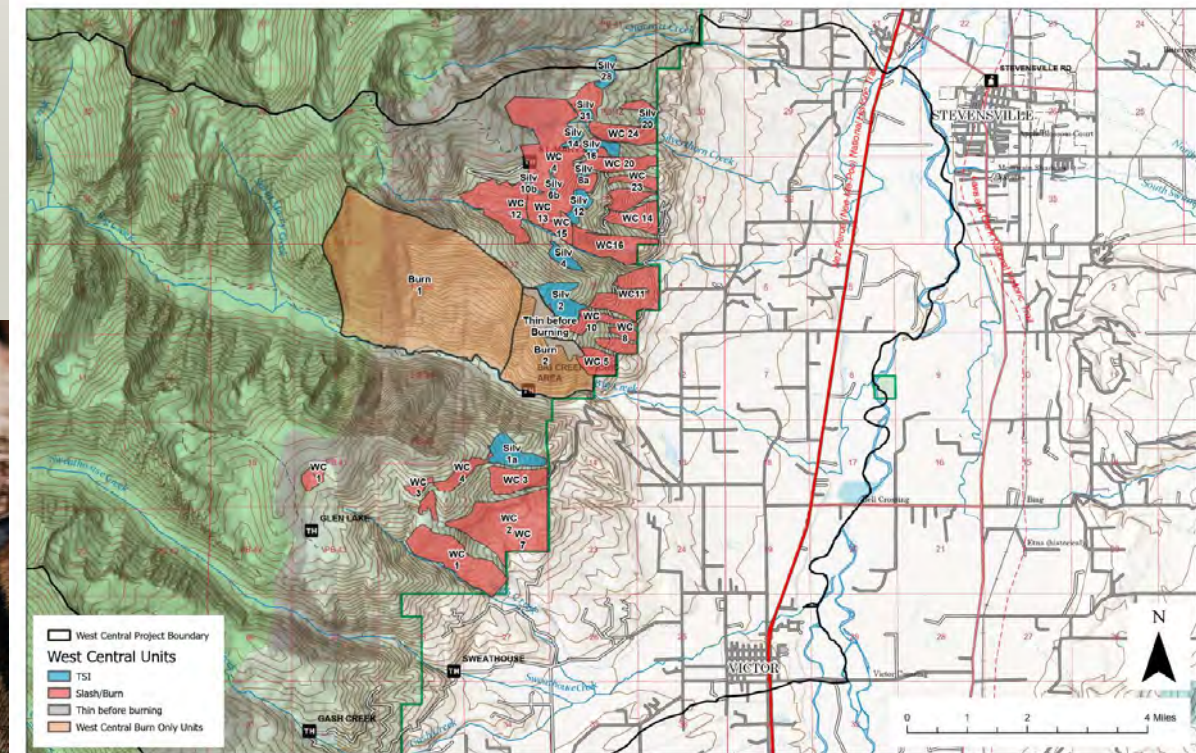
- Como Horselick Rx Burning and Thinning – 75 acres
- East Fork Bitterroot Rx Burning and Thinning – 1,237 acres
- West Fork Bitterroot Rx Burning – 625 acres



# BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST



- Como Horselick Rx Burning and Thinning – 147 acres
- East Fork Bitterroot Rx Burning and Thinning – 240 acres
- West Fork Bitterroot Rx Burning – 625 acres
- West Central Thinning – Assist in project mgmt. – 1,758 acres





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# ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

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4,251 acres of habitat restoration  
across the Lolo, Bitterroot, and  
Helena – Lewis & Clark NF




# ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2015

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- Accomplished 18,666 acres of Rx fire, thinning, or harvest treatments with my technical assistance/involvement
- Secured \$139,315 in grants for project implementation from partners beyond UGBEP
- Influenced 7,300 of “expected” acres through NEPA assistance



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Thanks for an incredible  
eight years of partnership!

David Nikonow

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