



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: Oct. 19, 2023

Agenda Item: Marshall Creek WMA Log Deck Removal

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: The lightning-caused Colt Fire started on July 17, 2023, eventually spreading to over 7,200 acres and burning approximately 400 acres of the Marshall Creek WMA. Suppression efforts involved creating a shaded fuel break (thinned buffer along roadside) along the Marshall Creek Road. The fire crews cut live standing trees that were piled at various locations along the road. FWP is proposing to sell the cut trees to a sawmill in order to get the trees removed.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The incident command team (ICT) has held regular meetings with the affected public while the fire has been on-going to discuss fire suppression efforts. The public had the opportunity to comment on this proposal between Aug. 21 and Sept. 18. leading up to the commission meeting and there will be an opportunity at the commission meeting. In accordance with ARM 12.2.430(5)(c), this state action is not subject to Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review.

Alternatives & Analysis:

Alternative A: Remove trees from the site to reduce disease potential and sell for use by the wood products industry.

Alternative B: The trees could be ground into chips, which would be a less practical solution due to the size of the trees and the amount of wood chips that would be generated. The chips would be left as a deep layer on the roadside, which vegetation would not be able to penetrate.

Alternative C: Trees could be left or scattered in the forest adjacent to the road but may attract bark beetles that could result in a bark beetle infestation of the adjacent stands and/or be subject to illegal firewood cutting.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the trees be removed from the site, which would reduce the potential for the trees to be infested by bark beetles and/or illegally cut for firewood. The timber can be sold to a sawmill, which will offset the cost of loading and hauling the trees to the mill.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve FWP's proposal to remove and sell log decks from the Marshall Creek WMA.