

SHAWN THOMAS

Executive Leader in Natural Resources

Helena, Montana, US



PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Seasoned natural resources executive with 30+ years of progressive leadership in forestry, trust land management, and wildland fire protection. Expert in strategic planning, legislative advocacy, and managing complex budgets exceeding \$100M. Proven ability to lead large, geographically dispersed teams, drive statewide initiatives, and build collaborative partnerships to deliver sustainable land management solutions. Recognized for integrity, adaptability, and results-driven leadership in high-stakes environments.

Core Leadership Values:

- Relationship-builder
- Mentor
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Adaptability
- Emotional Intelligence

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Montana State Forester and Division Administrator, Forestry and Trust Land Division

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
January 2023 – Present

Under an agency reorganization, maintained duties and responsibilities of trust lands management in addition to leadership of forestry and fire programs and the role as Montana's State Forester.

Key Responsibilities:

- Management and oversight of operating budget exceeding \$35 million, plus responsibility for up to \$100 million of spending from the fire suppression fund annually

- Oversee daily operations for 6 Area offices geographically distributed across Montana
- Division management of over 375 employees, including direct supervision of 8 managers
- Executive management decisions encompassing human resources, finance and budgeting, communications, safety, and legal
- Division responsible for wildland fire protection of 55 million acres across Montana
- Serve as department expert on land management, forestry, and fire suppression for all aspects of the legislative process

Major Projects and Achievements:

- Implementation and expansion of Montana's Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) program to expand restoration of Montana's forests
- Executed first-ever landscape level Shared Stewardship Agreement with USFS to manage 200,000+ acres over 20 years
- Passage and implementation of \$30+ million/year in new fire suppression and fuels mitigation work under House Bill 883 from the 2023 legislative session
- Led statewide effort to increase pace and scale of needed forest management work across Montana

Division Administrator, Trust Land Management

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

November 2011 – January 2023

Led and oversaw a substantial endowment of land for trust beneficiaries: 5.2 million surface acres and 6.2 million acres of mineral estate producing \$90–\$100 million in gross revenues annually.

Key Responsibilities:

- Coordinated development, presentation, promotion, and defense of trust land projects at monthly meetings of the state Board of Land Commissioners
- Defended and explained division budget in reviews by the Governor's office, state Legislative Services office, and in testimony throughout legislative procedures
- Formulated trust land division's biennial budget request to the Governor's budget office and the legislature
- Determined major issues pertaining to compliance with laws, rules, and regulations; division capabilities and limitations; the executive planning process; and the legislative appropriations process

Major Projects and Achievements:

- Negotiated and oversaw creation of the first large-scale monetization of trust land resources through a recreational use easement
- Oversaw efforts to sustainably increase annual timber harvest from trust lands by 3 million board feet

- Passed legislation to move oil and gas lease sales to an online platform
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Bureau Chief, Forest Management

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

November 2008 – November 2011

Provided programmatic oversight for 780,000 acres of forested school trust lands producing \$8–\$11 million in trust revenues annually.

Key Responsibilities:

- Management of 14 bureau employees, including recruitment, performance management, mentoring, and coaching
- Management of statewide program resources: 70 employees and \$5 million in budget
- Presentation and coordination of forest management projects for approval by the Director of DNRC and the Montana Board of Land Commissioners
- Ensuring all projects meet rules, laws, and policies governing the forest management program

Major Projects and Achievements:

- Acquisition of over 50,000 acres of new trust lands timberland
 - Completion of DNRC's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), a long-term negotiated management agreement with the United States Fish & Wildlife Service
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Trust Land Program Manager, Northwest Land Office

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

March 2006 – November 2008

Provided programmatic leadership, vision, and strategy for multiple trust lands programs including timber management, real estate, recreation, agriculture and grazing, and minerals management.

Key Responsibilities:

- Supervision of seven full-time professionals
- Managed budgets totaling over \$2.5 million
- Led the land office's Forest Management Committee (FMC) – foresters and resource specialists who coordinate tactical implementation of the area's forest management program, ensuring projects are on time and on budget
- Ensured area projects were consistent with statewide rules, regulations, and policy
- Established positive and effective working relationships between area, field operations, and multiple bureau staff

- Responsible for implementing sound public participation strategies on controversial projects
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Forest Management Supervisor, Plains Unit

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

February 2003 – March 2006

Key Responsibilities:

- Direct supervision of two full-time foresters
 - Organized and planned for sale and administration of 7 million board feet annually to meet unit timber goals; regularly exceeded targets to help with area goals
 - Coordinated out-year work plans and budgets to accomplish goals for the Plains Unit and the Northwestern Land Office
 - Coordinated forest improvement activities, including planting, pre-commercial thinning, and chemical application for vegetation control
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Procurement Forester

Thompson River Lumber Company

November 1999 – January 2003

Key Responsibilities:

- Following and commenting on important state and national issues related to natural resource policy
 - Meeting company goals and objectives for delivered log prices from timber sales
 - Working up all timber sale appraisals and bids
 - Negotiating prices and contract stipulations for all logging and other timber sale-related contracts
 - Working daily with timber sale administrators from MT DNRC, Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to achieve successful implementation of timber sale contracts
 - Timber sale appraisals and bids created and integrated with budget and cost management for \$10 million per year of log inventory
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Forestry Aide, GIS Seasonal, Forestry Intern

Plum Creek Timber Company

April 1994 – November 1999

Key Responsibilities:

- All aspects of timber sale layout, design, contracting, and post-sale follow-up
 - Implementing Montana's Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) law and Best Management Practices (BMPs) for forestry activities
 - Various forest inventory and geographic information systems (GIS) work
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EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science in Forest Resource Management

University of Montana
Graduated May 1995

Leadership Training

- **Leadership Montana Flagship Class 2018**
 - **Graduate of Leadership Flathead 2006**
 - **Leadership Challenge Seminar by Kouzes/Posner**
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VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AND RECOGNITION

- **2023 - Present:** Member, Society of American Foresters
- **2024 - 2025:** President, National Association of State Trust Lands
- **2023 - 2024:** President, Rotary Club of Helena
- **2022:** Recipient of DNRC Deputy Director's Award
- **2020 - 2025:** Board Member, Rotary Club of Helena
- **2018 - 2025:** Member, Rotary Club of Helena
- **2011:** Recipient of Governor's Award for Excellence in Performance (HCP Team)
- **2010:** Recipient of DNRC Division Administrator's Team Award
- **2010:** Recipient of Missoula Chapter Society of American Foresters "Forester of the Year"
- **1995 - 2011:** Member, Society of American Foresters
- **2005 and 2007:** Recipient of Paragon of Performance Awards
- **2003 - 2005:** Foreman, Trout Creek Rural Fire Department Board of Trustees
- **1999 - 2005:** Member, Trout Creek Rural Fire Department

- **2003 - 2005:** Director, Montana Paint Horse Club
- **1999 - 2003:** Member, Montana Logging Association