

Public participation is an important part of the analysis, commencing with the initial scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7), which will occur in the period February/March 1995. In addition, the public is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. A public meeting will be held late February or early March 1995 in Troy, Montana.

Comments from the public and other agencies will be used in preparation of the Draft EIS. The scoping process will be used to:

1. Identify potential issues.
2. Identify major issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Eliminate minor issues or those which have been covered by a relevant previous environmental analysis, such as the Kootenai Forest Plan EIS.
4. Identify alternatives to the proposed action.
5. Identify potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects).
6. Determine potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

Some public comments have already been received. The following preliminary issues have been identified so far:

1. How may proposed road reconstruction and subdivision of the private land affect the water quality in Bull Lake?
2. How will the proposed road construction and subdivision affect threatened, endangered and sensitive species in the area?
3. How may the proposed road construction affect big game winter range use?

Other issues commonly associated with such activities include: effects on cultural resources, soils, old growth, and scenery values. This list may be verified, expanded, or modified based on public scoping for this proposal.

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and available for public review in September of 1995. At that time, the EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the Draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA's notice of availability appears in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in

management of this area participate at that time. To be most helpful, comments on the Draft EIS should be as site-specific as possible. The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed by January 1996.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45-day scoping comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in developing issues and alternatives.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

I have the final authority for issuing a decision regarding this proposal. I have delegated the responsibility of preparing the EIS to Three Rivers District Ranger, Michael Balboni. My address is Kootenai National Forest, 506 U.S. Hwy 2 West, Libby, MT 59923.

Dated: January 27, 1995.

Robert L. Schrenk,

Forest Supervisor.

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BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

Skyline Ridge EIS, Kootenai National Forest, Lincoln County, Montana

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The USDA, Forest Service, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental effects associated with fire recovery activities in the areas of four 1994 wildfires, including Pulpit, Studebaker, Gunsight, and Seventeenmile fires. The project area is located in the Seventeenmile, O'Brien, and Lower Yaak Physiographic Areas of the Three Rivers Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest, Lincoln County, Montana. Part of the proposed project's activities lie within Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA's).

The Forest Service proposes to salvage timber, construct and reconstruct roads, reduce fuel concentrations, revegetate with trees, native shrubs, and grass, and obliterate roads. These activities are being considered together because they represent either connected or cumulative actions as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.25). The purposes of the proposed action's activities are to harvest fire killed timber in a timely manner, manage the road systems, reduce future potential for catastrophic fire, sustain timber productivity, improve wildlife and riparian habitat, specifically for threatened, endangered, or sensitive (TES) species, and accelerate watershed recovery. An amendment to the Kootenai Forest Plan is also part of this proposal.

Overall guidance of land management activities on the Kootenai National Forest, including timber harvest and road management, are regulated by the Kootenai National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) (September, 1987). In addition we considered more recent scientific thinking on the functioning of forest ecosystems (Ecosystems Management). Based on this analysis we developed a proposed action that does not meet Forest Plan standards. Specifically we proposed timber harvest in management Area 2, roadless recreation.

DATE: Written comments and suggestions should be received on or before March 6, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments and suggestions on the proposed management activities or a request to be placed on the project mailing list to Michael L. Balboni, District Ranger, Three Rivers Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest, 1437 North Hwy 2, Troy, Montana 59935.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Prieve, EIS Team Leader, Three Rivers Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest, Phone (406) 295-4693.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The project area consists of approximately 6375 acres of National Forest land. The Seventeenmile fire was 1773 acres and is located within all or portions of T33N, R32W, Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 and T34N, R32W, Sections 33 and 34. The Studebaker fire was 1896 acres and located within all or portions of T33N, R33W, Section 36; T33N, R32W, Sections 30, 31 and 32; and T32N, R33W, Sections 1, 2 and 3. The Pulpit fire was 2085 acres and is located within all or portions of T32N, R33W, Sections 9, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23 and 27. The Gunsight fire was 621 acres and is located within all or portions of T33N, R33W, Sections 21, 22, 27 and 28.

Timber salvage harvest of dead and dying timber is proposed on 2556 acres of forested land within the four fires using a variety of logging systems. Approximately 20 MMBF is proposed for harvest. This includes 750 acres within the 1773-acre Seventeenmile fire, 429 acres within the 621-acre Gunsight fire, 588 acres within the 2085-acre Pulpit fire and 789 acres within the 1896-acre Studebaker fire. Fuel reduction accomplished in conjunction with the timber harvest includes grapple piling and prescribed burning. Watershed restoration activities are proposed within and in the vicinity adjacent to the fires. This includes road obliteration (approximately 15 miles) which consists of scarification, seeding, and pulling culverts from roads, recontouring, and riparian planting and debris placement in stream channels (approximately 10 miles). Replanting is proposed on approximately 4412 acres of land—including both conifer seedlings for reforestation and native shrubs and herbaceous plants for wildlife habitat. The timber harvest operations would require construction of approximately 2 miles of temporary road and reconstruction of approximately 22 miles of existing roads. This action would require temporarily opening approximately 31 miles of roads currently restricted from vehicle traffic.

Approximately 1131 acres proposed for harvest lie within one of two Inventoried Roadless Areas: Roderick IRK (#684)—710 acres in the Seventeenmile fire, and Saddle IRA (#168)—421 acres in the Gunsight fire. No road construction would occur within these areas.

The areas proposed for salvaging fire damaged timber occur in a wide range of Management Areas (MA's) as defined in the Kootenai Forest Plan.

Below is a brief description of the affected Management Areas for the

proposed action, along with the number of acres proposed for harvest within each MA:

Management Area 2—These areas are characterized by a natural-appearing environment offering roadless recreation opportunities and are within an unsuitable timber base 680 acres proposed for salvage harvest.

Management Area 2-OG—These MA 2 areas consist of scattered parcels of existing old growth or mature timber stands which contain component of old growth and are within an unsuitable timber base. 83 acres.

Management Area 33—These are areas with a natural-appearing environment and a minimal number of adjacent or internal roads offering roaded recreation opportunities and are within an unsuitable timber base. They occur mostly in upper elevations from 4,500' and up. 49 acres.

Management Area 10—These are areas that are used by various species of big game for winter range, usually between December 1 and April 30 and are within an unsuitable timber base. 15 acres.

Management Area 12—These areas are generally located at or above elevations of 4000' and contain inclusions of moist or wet habitat types. Most species of big game use this management area during the period from late spring through late fall. This management area is characterized by suitable timber producing sites and moderate to rolling topography. 891 acres.

Management Area 13—These areas consist of scattered parcels of existing old growth or mature timber stands which contain components of old growth and are within an unsuitable timber base. 628 acres.

Management Area 14—These areas are identified Interagency Grizzly situations 1 and 2 in conjunction with suitable timber land. 105 acres.

Management Area 18—This management area occurs on areas of slopes in excess of 40% where timber productivity is moderate to high. It is distinguished by the difficulty in establishing coniferous regeneration and is within an unsuitable timber base. 105 acres.

For those management areas classified an unsuitable for timber production, an amendment to the Forest Plan would be required to implement the ecosystem management based proposal or any alternative which would harvest timber in unsuitable timber MA's. These would include MA's 2, 2-OG, 3, and 13.

The Forest Service will consider a range of alternatives. One of these will be the "no action" alternative, in which

none of the proposed activities would be implemented. Another alternative will be analyzed which meets Forest Plan direction. Additional alternatives will examine varying levels and locations for the proposed activities to achieve the purpose and need, as well as respond to the issues and concerns identified by the public.

The interdisciplinary team (IDT) has identified tentative or preliminary issues briefly described as follows:

(1) The effects of the proposed action and alternatives on the characteristics of the IRA's and unsuitable management areas.

(2) The effects of the proposed action and alternatives on water quality and fisheries.

(3) The effects of the proposed action and alternatives on ecosystem health and the risk of catastrophic wildfires and insect or disease outbreaks.

(4) The effects of the proposed action and alternatives on threatened, endangered, or sensitive (TES) species, such as the grizzly bear and bull trout.

(5) The effects of the proposed action and alternatives on timber supply.

The EIS will analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of the proposed action and each alternative, including no action. These include past, present, and projected activities on both private and National Forest lands along with proposed mitigation measures and their effectiveness.

The decision to be made is how much, if any, fire damaged timber should be salvaged in these fire areas, within the context of ecosystem management and Forest Plan direction.

Public participation is an important part of the analysis, commencing with the initial scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7), which will occur February 3, 1995 to March 6, 1995. In addition, the public is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. A public meeting will be scheduled in Troy, Montana on February 28, 1995, and at the Upper Ford Work Center on March 1, 1995.

Comments from the public and other agencies will be used in preparation of the Draft EIS. The scoping process will be used to:

1. Identify potential issues.
2. Identify major issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Eliminate minor issues or those which have been covered by a

relevant previous environmental analysis, such as the Kootenai Forest Plan.

4. Identify alternatives to the proposed action.
5. Identify potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects).
6. Determine potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and available for public review in April of 1995. At that time, the EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the Draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA's notice of availability appears in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in management of the analysis area participate at that time. To be most helpful, comments on the Draft EIS should be as site-specific as possible. The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed by September, 1995.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 30-day scoping comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in developing issues and alternatives.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy

Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

I have the final authority for issuing a decision regarding this proposal. I have delegated the responsibility of preparing the EIS to Three Rivers District Ranger, Michael Balboni. My address is Kootenai National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 506 Hwy 2 West, Libby, MT 59923.

Dated: January 27, 1995.

Robert L. Schrenk,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 95-2634 Filed 2-2-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

Winter Recreation Plan for the Lakes Basin/Sierra Buttes Area, Tahoe National Forest, Sierra County, CA

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a Winter Recreation Plan for the Lakes Basin/Sierra Buttes Area on the Downieville District of the Tahoe National Forest. Winter use in the area has been monitored as required by the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, to determine management needs. The EIS will analyze several proposed snow groomer shed construction sites, possible opportunities for resorts and organizational camps to broaden services to include winter sports activities, and further develop both snowmobile trails and nordic ski trails where snowmobiles may be restricted.

The Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), completed March, 1990, proposes to prepare a winter recreation management plan "to assure orderly development and management of cross country skiing and snowmobiling use within the area."

The agency invites comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis. In addition, the agency gives notice of the full environmental analysis and decision-making process that will occur on the plan so that interested and affected people are aware of how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the analysis should be received in writing by March 20, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Written comments concerning the project should be directed to Jean M. Masquelier, District Ranger, Downieville Ranger District, North Yuba Ranger Station, 15924 Hwy 49, Camptonville, CA 95922.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mary Furney, Dispersed Recreation Assistant, Downieville Ranger District, North Yuba Ranger Station, Camptonville, CA 95922, telephone 916 288-3231 or 916 478-6253.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In preparing the environmental impact statement, the Forest Service will identify and analyze a range of opportunities in the plan.

Public participation will be important at several points during the analysis, especially the review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The first point is during the scoping process. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. This input will be used in preparation of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The scoping process includes:

1. Identifying potential issues.
2. Identifying issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Eliminating insignificant issues or those both which have been covered by a relevant previous environmental analysis.
4. Exploring additional alternatives.
5. Identifying potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects and connected actions).
6. Determining potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

Organizations, and individuals who may be interested in, or affected by the decision, will be solicited to identify significant issues. Public participation has been previously solicited through mailing letters to private land owners, politicians, county supervisors, continued participation will be emphasized through public meetings and mailings.

The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by May 30, 1995. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the