

2. Allow postfire activities as described in the Fall Creek Postfire Project to proceed without on Order 2 soil survey. Soil information of sufficient detail to address NEPA issues and required effects disclosure will be provided.

#### Preliminary Issues

The Forest Service has identified six preliminary issues raised by the Proposed Action:

1. Effects on water quality in the North Fork Payette River and Payette Lake, which supplies domestic water to McCall. The river is designated a Stream Segment of Concern by the State of Idaho.

2. Effects on fish habitat in the North Fork Payette River and its tributaries, habitat for westslope cutthroat trout and former habitat for bull trout (sensitive species). The North Fork Payette River is a key watershed in the draft Bull Trout Conservation Agreement between Idaho Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service.

3. Effects on sensitive wildlife species including the boreal owl and three-toed woodpecker.

4. Effects on visual quality as seen from the city of McCall.

5. Effects on wilderness characteristics within the Secesh Roadless Area.

6. The economic efficiency of proposed projects, and effects on socio-economic and social systems around the Payette National Forest.

#### Possible Alternatives

The Forest Service has identified two alternatives to the Proposed Act: a no action alternative, and an alternative that uses tractor, skyline, and helicopter logging with road construction. As the public raises additional logging with road construction. As the public raises additional issues and provides more information, the Forest may develop additional alternatives.

#### Decisions To Be Made

The Payette National Forest Supervisor will decide:

Whether to allow salvage logging and/or thinning.

If so, where and how to harvest.

Whether to plant after harvest.

Whether to implement the wildlife projects.

What management requirements and mitigation measures are required as part of the project.

What monitoring requirements are appropriate to evaluate project implementation. And,

What Forest Plan amendment(s) are required.

#### Public Involvement Meetings

The Forest will hold five public scoping meetings to introduce the Proposed Actions for the three burned landscapes and to invite public comment: Riggins—February 15, 4–9 p.m., City Hall. McCall—February 16, 4–9 p.m., McCall Smokejumper Base. Council—February 21, 4–9 p.m., Council Ranger District office. Boise—February 23, 4–9 p.m., Red Lion Downtowner. Grangeville—February 27, 1–3 p.m., Nez Perce National Forest Supervisor's office. In addition, Forest Service personnel will make added public presentations on request.

#### Agency/Public Contacts

The Forest is mailing a summary of the Proposed Action, preliminary issues, and background information on the analysis to key individuals, groups, and agencies for comment. The mailing list includes those on the Payette postfire mailing list and those generally interested in Payette National Forest NEPA projects.

#### Schedule

Draft Environmental Impact Statement, May 1995. Final EIS, August 1995. Implementation, September 1995.

#### Comments

Comments on the Proposed Action and analysis should be received in writing on or before March 10, 1995. Send comments to: Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest, P.O. Box 1026, 106 W. Park Street, McCall, ID 83638; telephone (208) 634-0700; FAX (208) 634-0281.

The comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency 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 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, 1002 (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 important that those interested in this Proposed Action participate by the close of the 45 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues raised by the Proposed Action, comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. 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.

#### Responsible Official

David F. Alexander, Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest, P.O. Box 1026, 106 West Park, McCall, ID 83638.

Dated: January 31, 1995.

**David F. Alexander,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

[FR Doc. 95-2915 Filed 2-6-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

#### Main Salmon River Postfire Project, Payette National Forest, Idaho

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

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

**SUMMARY:** In the summer and fall of 1994, the Corral Fire covered nearly 116,000 acres of Payette National Forest north of McCall, Idaho. The Forest Service intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for portions of the wildfire area to assess and disclose the environmental effects of a proposal. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to remove fire-killed and imminently dead timber, recover its economic value and meet socio-economic demands of local communities, reforest the area, retain and enhance wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion and decrease sedimentation, and maintain fish habitat.

All actions include provisions for snags, dead and down woody debris,

visual quality, cultural resources, TES species, and wild and scenic river study corridors, and would comply with the Bull Trout Conservation Agreement and the PACFISH guidelines for water quality, and fisheries.

This project would be accomplished through a salvage sale of burned timber on about 8,800 acres, using helicopter logging, skyline logging, and tractor logging; approximately 3.5 miles of road construction in the upper Elkhorn Creek area (followed by road closure); planting of conifer seedlings; and reconstruction or repair of roads to improve vehicle passage and improve watershed conditions. The salvage sale proceeds would help finance the other activities.

The project lies 20 to 35 miles north of McCall, in the Elkhorn, French, Fall, and Carey Creek drainages, tributary to the main Salmon River. It lies partly within the French Creek/Patrick Butte Roadless Area.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kimberly Brandel, New Meadows District Ranger (208 634-0300); or Tracy Beck, Interdisciplinary Team Leader (208 634-0780).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** From July to October 1994, wildfires covered a total of about 290,000 acres of Payette National Forest. The Corral Fire was ignited in early August by lightning strikes northwest of the city of McCall, and eventually covered about 116,000 acres until stopped by winter weather in mid-October. Within this perimeter, it burned in a mosaic pattern of fire intensities including some unburned areas.

In October, Payette National Forest convened three interdisciplinary groups of Forest resource specialists to assess the landscapes affected by the fires: one each of the Blackwell landscape, the Corral landscape, and the Chicken landscape. Each landscape was composed of two or more watersheds. The Corral landscape encompassed over 203,000 acres in French Creek and Lake Creek watersheds and portions of California Creek and Lower Main Salmon watersheds. The Forest also convened a team to assess the broad-scale area, which encompasses the three landscapes plus the Thunderbolt landscape to the south.

In January 1995, each landscape team produced a landscape assessment encompassing their analysis area. The teams used an ecosystem-based approach to assess the fires' effects and to propose target landscape conditions, based on the Forest Plan and the historic range of variation. Each team identified management opportunities that could be implemented this year and in the future

to move their postfire landscape toward the target landscape design. The Forest leadership team selected a package of proposed actions for each landscape to bring forward into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process.

The Proposed Action for the main Salmon River described herein is one product of the Corral landscape assessment: it proposes the high-priority short term projects related to timber salvage and other postfire resource opportunities consistent with the target landscape design for the Corral landscape.

Burn intensities, as defined by degree of tree mortality, in the Corral landscape varied from intensely burned to unburned. Within the Corral landscape, which includes a portion of the Corral fire, approximately 22,500 acres burned at high intensity (tree mortality greater than 90%), 19,600 acres at moderate intensity (tree mortality greater than 30% and less than 90%), and 25,300 acres at low intensity (tree mortality less than 30%). The remainder of the landscape did not burn.

An estimated 90,220 acres of the French Creek/Patrick Butte Roadless Area lie within the Corral landscape.

Simultaneous with this Notice of Intent, Payette National Forest is also publishing two Notices of Intent for other postfire proposals. The "Fall Creek Postfire Project" EIS will cover part of the Blackwell landscape, and the "Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project" EIS will cover the Chicken landscape. The Forest Service will analyze the two projects concurrently with this "Main Salmon River Postfire Project" proposal.

#### **Purpose and Need**

The need is to move toward the desired future conditions, goals and objectives as described in the Payette Forest Plan and the target landscape design in the Corral Landscape Assessment. The Corral Landscape Assessment was tiered to the Forest Plan and identifies a strategy to implement the plan in an ecosystem management context. The proposed action is derived from management opportunities in the landscape assessment. The purpose of each element of the proposed action is:

*Salvage:* To recover economic value of burned timber for counties and timber-related industries and provide wood fiber for society. Past experience with wildfire timber recovery in south-central Idaho indicates that prompt harvest is needed to recover the economic value of fire-killed trees. The trees in this project area, mostly

Douglas-fir, spruce/fir, and lodgepole pine, are expected to lose 30-60 percent of their economic value by the end of 1996. Part of the salvage sale proceeds will finance the regeneration, watershed improvement, and recreation elements of the project.

*Regeneration:* To promptly return to production those lands within the suited base that contribute to the allowable sale quantity.

*Watershed projects:* To improve watershed conditions to meet beneficial uses (fish habitat and domestic water supply).

*Recreation:* To improve recreation user access and reduce safety hazards caused by the fire.

#### **Proposed Action**

The Proposed Action has the following components:

1. Salvage harvest fire killed and imminently dead trees on approximately 8,800 acres using helicopter, skyline, and tractor. Construct helicopter landings along roads. Specifically, in Elkhorn Creek drainage, harvest within 3,540 acres, construct approximately 3.5 miles of road (close the new road to the public during and after salvage sale activities), and improve 12 miles of road. In French Creek drainage, harvest within 3,510 acres and improve 7.5 miles of road. In Fall and Carey Creek drainages, harvest within 1,750 acres and improve 25 miles of road. In the Lake Creek drainage, the Proposed Action includes road improvements and other resource improvement projects, but no salvage timber harvest. All road improvement work is detailed in item 3. of the proposed action. The proposal would not salvage harvest within the French Creek wild and scenic study corridor. It would not salvage harvest within PACFISH Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, which include riparian corridors along perennial and intermittent streams, wetlands, landslides, and landslide prone areas, where riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis. Harvesting would comply with the Draft Bull Trout Conservation Agreement. Site-specific integrated prescriptions to provide for snag/down woody debris retention, visual quality, cultural resource protection, and TES plant and animals would be developed consistent with the Forest Plan, landscape assessment and current policy/research.

2. Regenerate productive forest suited acres within the project area by planting conifer seedlings or ensuring natural regeneration.

3. Reconstruct or repair roads to facilitate log haul, improve vehicle

passage and/or improve watershed conditions, by repairing surface on six road segments, improving 11 stream crossings, and closing one road. Specifically, repair road surface, ditches, and/or fix stream crossings on segments of: Road #1339, Road #318, Road 321, Road #246, Road #1333, Road #592, Road #1340, Road #308, Road #1337, Road #1279, Road #565.

4. Remove hazard trees along recreation trails. There are opportunities to improve and relocate segments of trails within sale area boundaries along Forest Service trails # 115, 145, 149, 374, 500, and 504.

#### Forest Plan Amendment

Amendment to the Forest Plan may be needed to:

1. Allow plantation stocking levels below Forest Plan standards and guidelines to reflect natural stand conditions.

2. Allow postfire activities as described in the Main Salmon River Postfire Project to proceed without an Order 2 soil survey. Soil information of sufficient detail to address NEPA issues and required effects disclosure will be provided.

#### Preliminary Issues

The Forest Service has identified six preliminary issues raised by the Proposed Action:

1. Effects on water quality and quantity in the Salmon River, Elkhorn Creek, French Creek, Fall Creek and Carey Creek, and their beneficial use for native fish species and anadromous fish species habitat.

2. Effects on big game, furbearers, neotropical birds, raptors, and sensitive wildlife species habitat in and adjacent to the project areas.

3. Effects on recreation trails and use in the project area.

4. Effects on wilderness characteristics within the roadless area. The proposals lie partly within the French Creek/Patrick Butte Roadless Area.

5. Effects on the ability of the project areas to provide long term growth and yield of timber. Where the Corral Fire burned hot, it left no live trees. Where fire burned at low or moderate intensities, it left a mixture of dead, live, and damaged trees. Trees with crowns and trunks scorched are at risk of dying from fire damage or insect infestation. Grasses and shrubs can invade disturbed sites faster than trees can naturally reforest.

6. The economic, socio-economic, and social effects of salvage timber sales. This includes the economic efficiency of each salvage sale as measured by

present net value, the effects on jobs, income, payments to counties, and effects on local social groups.

#### Possible Alternatives

The Forest Service has identified two alternatives to the Proposed Action: a no action alternative, and an alternative that would not construct road or salvage harvest in the roadless area. As the public raises additional issues and provides more information, the Forest may develop additional alternatives.

#### Decisions to be Made

The Payette National Forest Supervisor will decide:

Whether to allow salvage logging.

If so, where and how to harvest.

Whether to plant after harvest.

Whether to implement watershed improvement and recreation projects.

What management requirements and mitigation measures are required as part of this project.

What monitoring requirements are appropriate to evaluate project implementation. And,

What Forest Plan amendment(s) are required?

#### Public Involvement Meetings

The Forest will hold five public scoping meetings to introduce the Proposed Actions for the three burned landscapes and to invite public comment: Riggins—February 15, 4–9 pm, City Hall. McCall—February 16, 4–9 pm, McCall Smokejumper Base. Council—February 21, 4–9 pm, Council Ranger District office. Boise—February 23, 4–9 pm, Red Lion Downtowner. Grangeville—February 27, 1–3 pm, Nez Perce National Forest Supervisor's office. In addition, Forest Service personnel will make added public presentations on request.

#### Agency/Public Contacts

The Forest is mailing a summary of the Proposed Action preliminary issues, and background information on the analysis to key individuals, groups, and agencies for comment. The mailing list includes those on the Payette postfire mailing list and those generally interested in Payette National Forest NEPA projects.

#### Schedule

Draft Environmental Impact Statement, May 1995. Final EIS, August 1995. Implementation, September 1995.

#### Comments

Comments on the Proposed Action and analysis should be received in writing on or before March 10, 1995. Send comments to: Forest Supervisor,

Payette National Forest, P.O. Box 1026, 106 W. Park Street, McCall, ID 83638; telephone (208) 634-0700; FAX (202) 634-0281.

The comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency 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 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*, 108 F.2d 1016, 1002 (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 important that those interested in this Proposed Action participate by the close of the 45 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues raised by the Proposed Action, comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. 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.

#### Responsible Official

David F. Alexander, Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest, P.O. Box 1026, 106 West Park, McCall, ID 83638.

Dated: January 31, 1995.

**David F. Alexander,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

[FR Doc. 95-2916 Filed 2-6-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

**Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project, Payette National Forest, Idaho**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

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

**SUMMARY:** In the summer and fall of 1994, the Chicken Fire covered 103,000 acres of Payette National Forest northeast of McCall, Idaho. The Forest Service intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for a portion of the wildfire area to assess and disclose the environmental effects of a proposal. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to remove fire-killed and imminently dead timber, recover its economic value and meet socio-economic demands of local communities, reforest the area, retain and enhance wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion and decrease sedimentation, improve fish habitat, and provide recreation access.

All actions include provisions for snags, dead and down woody debris, visual quality, cultural resources, TES species, and wild and scenic river study corridors, and would comply with the Bull Trout Conservation Agreement and PACFISH guidelines for water quality and fisheries.

This project would be accomplished through a salvage sale of burned timber on about 4,850 acres, using helicopter logging (no road construction); planting of conifer seedlings; repairing and improving drainage conditions on seven existing roads; converting a road to a trail; and constructing nest platforms for great gray owls. The salvage sale proceeds would help finance the other activities.

The project lies 25-40 miles northeast of McCall, in the lower South Fork Salmon River watershed, in the Smith Creek, Pony Creek, and Elk Creek drainages. It lies partly within the Secesh and Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak Roadless Areas.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Fred Dauber, Krassel District Ranger (208 634-0600); or Dan Anderson, Interdisciplinary Team Leader (208 634-0631).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** From July to October 1994, wildfires covered a total of about 290,000 acres of Payette National Forest. The Chicken Fire was ignited in mid-August by several

lightning strikes east of the town of Warren near the South Fork Salmon River, and eventually covered about 103,000 acres until stopped by winter weather in mid-October. Within this perimeter, it burned in a mosaic pattern of fire intensities including some unburned areas.

In October, Payette National Forest convened three interdisciplinary groups of Forest resources specialists to assess the landscapes affected by the fires: one each for the Blackwell landscape, the Corral landscape, and the Chicken landscape. Each landscape was composed of two or more watersheds. The Chicken landscape encompassed nearly 180,000 acres in the Lower South Fork and Elk Creek watersheds. The Forest also convened a team to assess the broad-scale area, which encompasses the three landscapes plus the Thunderbolt landscape to the south.

In January 1995, each landscape team produced a landscape assessment encompassing their fire area. The teams used an ecosystem-based approach to assess the fires' effects and to propose target landscape conditions, based on the Forest Plan and the historic range of variation. Each team identified management opportunities that could be implemented this year and in the future to move their respective postfire landscape toward the target landscape design. The Forest leadership team selected a package of proposed actions for each landscape to bring forward into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process.

The Proposed Action for the Lower South Fork Salmon River described herein is one product of the Chicken landscape assessment: it proposes the high-priority short term projects related to timber salvage and other postfire resources opportunities consistent with the target landscape design for the Chicken Landscape.

Burn intensities, as defined by degree of tree mortality, in the Chicken landscape varied from intensely burned to unburned. Within the Chicken landscape, which includes a portion of the Chicken Fire, approximately 36,900 acres burned at high intensity (tree mortality greater than 90%), 23,700 acres at moderate intensity (tree mortality greater than 30% and less than 90%), and 28,200 acres at low intensity (tree mortality less than 30%). The remainder of the landscape did not burn.

An estimated 83,300 acres of the Secesh Roadless Area and 30,900 acres of the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak Roadless Area lie within the Chicken landscape, of which about 34,500 acres

and 21,000 acres were burned, respectively.

The primary management emphasis in the South Fork Salmon River drainage is restoration of harvestable, robust, self-sustaining populations of naturally reproducing salmon and trout. The South Fork Salmon River was the single largest producer of summer chinook salmon in the Columbia River Basin by the 1950's. Since then this run has continued to decline significantly, partially due to habitat degradation caused by management-induced sediment. The Snake River spring/summer and fall chinook salmon are now listed as endangered species. The South Fork's steelhead, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout are listed by the Forest Service as sensitive. Some spawning areas and major winter habitats for both endangered and sensitive fishes are influenced by the project area. Numerous road-related sediment sources continue to deliver sediment to the South Fork and tributaries, adversely affecting fish habitat.

Simultaneous with this Notice of Intent, Payette National Forest is also publishing two Notices of Intent for other postfire proposals. The "Fall Creek Postfire Project" EIS will cover part of the Blackwell landscape, and the "Main Salmon River Postfire Project" EIS will cover the Corral landscape. The Forest Service will analyze the two projects concurrently with this "Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project" proposal.

**Purpose and Need**

The need is to adapt to the changed conditions in the South Fork Salmon River drainage and move toward the desired future conditions, goals and objectives as described in the Payette Forest Plan and the target landscape design in the Chicken Landscape Assessment. The Chicken Landscape Assessment was tiered to the Forest Plan and identifies a strategy to implement the plan in an ecosystem management context. The proposed action is derived from management opportunities in the landscape assessment. The purpose of each element of the proposed action is:

*Salvage:* To recover economic value of burned timber for counties and timber-related industries and provide wood fiber for society. Past experience with wildfire timber recovery in south-central Idaho indicates that prompt harvest is needed to recover the economic value of fire-killed trees. The trees in this project area, mostly ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, grand fir, and lodgepole pine, are expected to lose