

Dated: January 31, 1995.

**David F. Alexander,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

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### **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

30–40% of their economic value by the end of 1996. Part of the salvage sale proceeds will finance the regeneration, watershed improvement, recreation and wildlife habitat 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.

**Wildlife:** To enhance habitat components for sensitive species.

### Proposed Action

The Proposed Action has the following components:

1. Salvage harvest fire-killed and imminently-dead trees on approximately 4,850 acres. Harvest by helicopter only. Construct seven helicopter landings. Reconstruct about 5.5 miles of road in four segments to facilitate log haul; no road construction is proposed. Specifically, on road #337, reconstruct ¼ mile of road by increasing the radius on 1 switchback; road #340, reconstruct 2¼ miles of road by increasing the radius on two switchbacks and realigning multiple tight radius turns; road #355, reconstruct 1½ miles of road by increasing the radius on one switchback, and improve the running surface where degraded by large rocks; road #359, reconstruct 1½ miles of road by improving stream crossings, improving several tight radius turns, and improving the running surface by better drainage. The proposal would not harvest within the South Fork Salmon River wild and scenic study corridor. It would not harvest within PACFISH Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, which include riparian corridors, wetlands, landslides, and landslide-prone areas, where riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis. The proposal would not harvest on land having a combination of high erosion hazard and high sediment delivery to streams. Harvesting would comply with the Draft Bull Trout Conservation Agreement. Site specific integrated prescriptions to provide for snags/large woody debris retention, visual quality, cultural resource protection, and TES plant and animal needs would be developed consistent with the Forest Plan, landscape assessment and current policy/research.

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

3. Repair and improve drainage conditions on seven existing roads. Specifically, apply gravel, line inslope ditches, improve cross-drainage, stabilize cuts and fills, improve stream crossings, and/or stabilize gullies on segments of the: Hays Station Road (#337), Warren-Profile Gap Road (#340), China Glen Road (#357), Smith Knob Road (#355), Warren Wagon Road (Forest Highway 21), and Pony Meadows Road (#359).

4. Convert the Bear Lake Road (#1211) to a non-motorized trail.

5. Establish a trailhead at the end of Hays Station Road (#337).

6. Construct nest platforms for great gray owls in the Pony Meadows area.

7. Close to all vehicle traffic a non-system road from Warren Summit going west to just above Pony Meadows.

Methodologies, rationale, and findings associated with the Chicken landscape assessment and site specific environmental analysis are to be reviewed by a proposed Federal interagency science panel with panel members selected from Forest Service research and system branches, and other Federal agencies. Recommendations made by this panel could be used by line officers in directing the environmental analysis, formulating alternatives, disclosing environmental consequences, developing a monitoring plan, and making the final decision. This may include the option of not moving ahead with any or part of the proposed action or action alternatives if conclusive information shows that the action would be damaging to anadromous fish.

### Forest Plan Amendment

The Payette National Forest Plan has specific management direction for the South Fork Salmon River management areas. The Proposed Action is designed to improve watershed conditions and fish habitat, and is consistent with the objectives and goals of the Forest Plan. However, amendment to standards and guidelines in the Plan may be needed to:

1. Allow postfire activities including salvage logging of fire-killed and imminently dead trees as proposed in the Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project where the cumulative effect of all proposed projects results in a net improvement in potential sediment delivery to the South Fork Salmon River.

2. Allow postfire activities as described in the Lower South Fork 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.

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

4. Allow helicopter logging one-way flying distances beyond the Forest Plan standard and guideline of 1.5 miles but within 2.5 miles of existing roads.

5. In Management Area 16, allow postfire salvage logging by helicopter as proposed in the Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project.

### Preliminary Issues

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

1. Effects on water quality in the South Fork Salmon River and its tributaries and their beneficial use for spring/summer chinook salmon, bull trout, and other fish species habitat. The lower South Fork is a Stream Segment of Concern and a Water Quality Limited Segment (State of Idaho, Division of Environmental Quality).

2. Impacts of not implementing the Forest Plan recovery strategy for the South Fork Salmon River before implementing new timber entry.

3. Effects on sensitive wildlife species including white-headed woodpecker and goshawk.

4. Effects on wilderness characteristics within the Secesh and Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak Roadless Areas.

5. Effects on human use and access due to closing roads to reduce sediment.

6. Effects on the ability of the project areas to provide long term growth and yield of timber. Where the Chicken 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.

7. 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 three alternatives to the Proposed Action: a no action alternative, an alternative that would not salvage harvest in the roadless areas, and an alternative that salvage harvests by helicopter additional acres on more sensitive soil types. 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 the sediment reducing, recreation, and wildlife improvement 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 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 26, 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 (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.*

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**COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS****Agenda and Notice of Public Meeting of the North Carolina Advisory Committee**

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and

regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, that a meeting of the North Carolina Advisory Committee to the Commission will convene at 10:00 a.m. and adjourn at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 1, 1995, at the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, 411 West Chapel Hill Street, Durham, North Carolina 27701. The purpose of this meeting is: (1) to discuss the status of the Commission and Advisory Committees; (2) to hear reports on civil rights progress and/or problems in the State; (3) to discuss the transcripts of the current project on racial tensions in North Carolina.

Persons desiring additional information, or planning a presentation to the Committee, should contact Committee Chairperson Asa Spaulding, Jr., at 704-535-4500 or Bobby D. Doctor, Director of the Southern Regional Office, 404-730-2476 (TDD 404-730-2481). Hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign language interpreter should contact the Regional Office at least five (5) working days before the scheduled date of the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the Commission.

Dated at Washington, DC, January 27, 1995.

**Carol-Lee Hurley,**

*Chief, Regional Programs Coordination Unit.*

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****Agency Forms Under Review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)**

DOC has submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for clearance the following proposals for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35).

*Agency:* Bureau of Export Administration (BXA)

*Title:* International Import Certificate.

*Agency Form Number:* BXA-645P.

*OMB Approval Number:* 0694-0017.

*Type of Request:* Extension of a currently approved collection.

*Burden:* 1,986 hours.

*Number of Respondents:* 7,441.

*Avg Hours Per Response:* 10 to 15 minutes depending on the requirement. 1 minute for recordkeeping.

*Needs and Uses:* The U.S. and 20 other countries have established an Import Certificate Procedure to increase the effectiveness of controls over strategic commodities. When requested