

and copies of the DEIS will be available for viewing.

Robert McDowell,

Planning Staff Officer.

[FR Doc. 95-4563 Filed 2-23-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

Notice of the Preparation of the Southern Appalachian Assessment, and the Beginning of the Forest Plan Revision Efforts for the National Forests in Alabama, Chattahoochee-Oconee, Cherokee, and Sumter National Forests

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice is to announce the U.S. Forest Service's participation in the preparation of the Southern Appalachian Assessment (SAA). This Assessment is being prepared by the U.S. Forest Service (the Southern Region of the National Forest System and the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station) in cooperation with the other Federal agencies that are members of SAMAB (Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Cooperative). It will include national forest lands of the George Washington, Jefferson, Nantahala-Pisgah, Cherokee, and Chattahoochee National Forests; and parts of the Sumter and Talladega National Forests. Also involved will be National Park Service lands in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Shenandoah National Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

This notice also announces the beginning of the efforts to revise the Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) for the National Forests in Alabama, the Chattahoochee-Oconee, the Cherokee, and the Sumter National Forests. This is not the "Notice of Intent" (NOI) for the Environmental Impact Statements that will accompany the Revised Forest Plans. Those NOIs will be issued at a later date.

The Southern Appalachian Assessment will support and facilitate ecosystem management decisions to be made in Forest Plan revisions. As the National Forests in the Southern Appalachians are conducting their local efforts to describe their "Analysis of the Management Situation" (AMS), they will also be providing information for the larger scale Southern Appalachian Assessment.

The Assessment will be used to help determine each National Forests' "Need for Change" section of their AMS. This information will then be used to publish the Notices of Intent to prepare the Environmental Impact Statements,

which will begin the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) processes associated with each Forest Plan revision.

Public involvement is critical throughout these processes and it will be requested and accepted continually throughout these efforts. Formal public involvement with the Forest Plan revision efforts will also be conducted through "Scoping", following the issuance of the National Forests NOIs. **DATES:** The Southern Appalachian Assessment is scheduled to be completed by January 1996.

The National Forests in Alabama, the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, the Cherokee National Forest, and the Sumter National Forest are scheduled to complete the drafts of their Analysis of the Management Situation between October 1995 and January 1996. During this same time period, these Forests are scheduled to issue their Notices of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (NOI) for their Revised Land and Resource Management Plans. A Revised NOI for the Jefferson National Forest will also be issued during this time period.

ADDRESSES: Requests for information, and comments concerning this notice can be sent to:

Director, Planning and Budget, USDA-Forest Service, 1720 Peachtree Rd. NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30367-9102. Co-Team Leader, Southern Appalachian Assessment, USDA-Forest Service, 1720 Peachtree Rd. NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30367-9102.

Forest Supervisor, National Forests in Alabama, 2946 Chestnut, Montgomery, Alabama 36107-3010.

Forest Supervisor, Chattahoochee-Oconee NFs, 508 Oak Street NW, Gainesville, Georgia 30501.

Forest Supervisor, Cherokee NF, 2800 N. Oconee St. NE., P.O. Box 2010, Cleveland, Tennessee 37320-2010.

Forest Supervisor, Francis Marion-Sumter NFs, 4931 Broad River, Columbia, South Carolina 29210-4021.

Forest Supervisor, George Washington NF, P.O. Box 233, Harrison Plaza, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801.

Forest Supervisor, Jefferson NF, 5162 Valley Pointe Parkway, Roanoke, Virginia 24019-3050.

Forest Supervisor, National Forests in North Carolina, 100 Post and Otis Streets, P.O. Box 2750, Asheville, North Carolina 28802.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

For more information concerning this notice contact: Gary Pierson, Director of Planning and Budget, Southern Region. For more information on the Southern

Appalachian Assessment contact: Forrest Carpenter, Co-Team Leader, Southern Region. For more information from the individual National Forests contact: Rick Morgan, Planning Team Leader, National Forests in Alabama; Caren Briscoe, Planning Staff Officer, Chattahoochee-Oconee NF; Red Anderson, Planning Team Leader, Cherokee NF; Dave Plunkett, NEPA Coordinator, George Washington NF; Nancy Ross, Planning Team Leader, Jefferson NF; Larry Hayden, Planning Team Leader, Nantahala-Pisgah NF; Richard Shelfer, Planning Team Leader, Sumter NF.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. Preparation of the Southern Appalachian Assessment

The Southern Region of the National Forest System and the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, in cooperation with the other Federal agencies that are members of the Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Cooperative (SAMAB, i.e., the Environmental Protection Agency, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Geological Survey, the Department of Energy Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the Economic Development Administration, and the National Biological Survey) have begun conducting a Southern Appalachian Assessment (SAA). The Assessment will include the national forest lands of the George Washington, Jefferson, Nantahala-Pisgah, Cherokee, and Chattahoochee National Forests, and parts of the Sumter and Talladega National Forests. The Assessment will also include National Park Service lands in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Shenandoah National Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The Assessment will facilitate an interagency ecological approach to management in the Southern Appalachian area by collecting and analyzing broad-scale biological, physical, social and economic data to serve as a foundation for more local natural resource management decisions. The Assessment will be organized around four "themes"—(1) Terrestrial (which includes the Health of Forest Ecosystems, and Plant and Animal Resources); (2) Aquatic Resources; (3) Air Quality and (4) the Human Dimension of Ecosystems (which includes Communities and Human Influences; Roadless Areas and Wilderness; Recreation, Wildlife and Fish Supply and Demand; and the

Timber Economy of the Southern Appalachians).

Public comment on the SAA process began with a series of open town hall meetings held in Asheville, NC; Gainesville, GA; and Roanoke, VA in August 1994. In addition, interested members of the public were asked for further written comments to be received by September 15. As the Assessment progresses, continued public involvement will be facilitated through additional meetings and newsletters.

2. Beginning of the Forest Plan Revision Efforts for the National Forests in Alabama, the Chattahoochee-Oconee, the Cherokee, and the Sumter National Forests

This notice announces that the National Forests in Alabama, the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, the Cherokee National Forest, and the Sumter National Forest either have already started or are beginning efforts to revise their Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP). These Forests are each in the process of preparing their Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), one of the first steps in the revision process. This step includes updating resource inventories, defining the current situation, estimating supply capabilities and resource demands, and determining the "Need for Change" (36 CFR 219.12(e)(5)).

3. Public Involvement in Developing the "Need for Change" in an AMS

Determining the concerns and expectations of National Forests constituents and getting public input on how well current forest plans are working, or not working, are critical elements of describing the "need to change" a forest plan. An integral part of determining the need for change is public involvement. Each of the National Forests described above either have already, or will soon contact their interested public to solicit their participation in this step of the forest plan revision process.

4. Relationship Between the AMS and a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement

In the past, a "Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement" (NOI) was issued at the beginning of the forest planning process, including before the development of the AMS.

This time, we are first defining the current situation and an initial "need for change" in a Draft AMS, and then issuing a NOI prior to developing alternatives. This will allow us to

incorporate a more definable "Proposed Action" and "Purpose and Need" into our NOIs, which will begin the formal NEPA process of preparing the Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) that will accompany the Revised Land and Resource Management Plans.

5. Relationship Between the Southern Appalachian Assessment and the Process for Revising the Southern Appalachian National Forests' LRMPs

The public has expressed concern that the Southern Appalachian Assessment will "delay" revising National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans in the Southern Appalachians. However, the SAA is being conducted concurrently, and in support of, the forest plan revisions.

Many of the information needs for the Forest AMSs and for the SAA are the same. The Assessment will support the revision of the LRMPs by determining how the lands, resources, people and management of the National Forests interrelate within the larger context of the Southern Appalachian area. The SAA, however, will not be a "decision document" and it will not involve the NEPA process. As broad-scale issues are identified and addressed at the sub-regional level in the Assessment, the individual National Forest's role in resolving those broad-scale issues will become a part of the "need for change" at the Forest level.

6. Issuing the Notice of Intent To Prepare an EIS

The National Forests identified above will issue their NOIs when enough information from the SAA is available for them to develop the "Need for Change" section of their Draft AMS. The Draft AMSs are scheduled to be completed between October 1995 and January 1996. Their NOIs are also scheduled to be issued during this same time period.

Each NOI will include a description of a preliminary "Proposed Action" and of some preliminary alternatives. Scoping to receive public comments on the preliminary proposed action and preliminary alternatives will begin following the publication of the NOIs. These public comments will be used to further refine the "Proposed Action" and the preliminary alternatives, to possibly identify additional alternatives, and to finalize the AMS and the "Need for Change."

7. Status of the Jefferson, George Washington, and Nantahala-Pisgah National Forests

The Jefferson National Forest, which is also currently working on its Revised

LRMP, previously issued a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its Revised LRMP on June 28, 1993. A Revised NOI for the Forest will be issued between October 1995 and January 1996, to coincide with the NOIs issued for the other National Forests in the Southern Appalachians.

The George Washington National Forest completed its Final Revised Forest Plan on January 21, 1993, and the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forests completed a significant amendment, Amendment 5 to their Land and Resource Management Plan on March 18, 1994. These two forests are not currently involved in the revision process. However, if information from the Southern Appalachian Assessment identifies conditions requiring additions or changes to these plans to ensure consistency between the National Forests in the Southern Appalachians, then amendments to these plans could be considered.

8. The Responsible Official

The Responsible Official for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plans for the National Forests in the Southern Appalachians is Robert C. Joslin, Regional Forester, Southern Region, 1720 Peachtree Road NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30367.

Dated: January 18, 1995.

Lynn C. Neff,

Acting Regional Forester.

[FR Doc. 95-4570 Filed 2-23-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

Forest Products Laboratory Wood Utilization Research

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin, will host a meeting March 27-30, 1995, to brief industry and the public on Forest Service programs in wood utilization research. The Forest Service will be presenting the status and description of pending research initiatives and programs. Advice and recommendations to the Forest Service will not be solicited or accepted during the meeting; rather, input as a result of reviews may be submitted in writing after the meeting.

DATES: The meeting will be held March 27-30, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (M-Tu); 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. (W); 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. (Th).

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Forest Products Laboratory, One Gifford Pinchot Drive, Madison, Wisconsin.