Frequency of Responses: Reporting: On occasion.

Total Burden Hours: 4.

- Food and Consumer Service

Title: Negative Quality Control Review Schedule—Status of Sample Selection and Completion—Statistical Summary of Sample Disposition.

Summary: As part of a Performance Reporting System, each state agency is required to provide a systematic means of determining the accuracy of household eligibility and measuring the extent to which households receive the food stamp allotment to which they are entitled.

Need and Use of the Information: The information serves as an objective measure of program operations at the state level and is essential to the determination of a state agency's entitlement to an increased federal share of its administrative costs or liability for sanctions.

Description of Respondents: State, Local or Tribal Government; Individuals or households; Federal Government.

Number of Respondents: 35,132.

Frequency of Responses: Recordkeeping; Reporting: Monthly; Annually.

Total Burden Hours: 107,135.

Donald E. Hulcher,

Deputy Departmental Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 96–19552 Filed 7–31–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–01–M

Agricultural Research Service

Notice of Intent To Grant Exclusive License

AGENCY: Agricultural Research Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of availability and intent to grant exclusive license.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that a Federally owned cultivar of centipede grass, ''TifBlair,'' is available for licensing and that the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, intends to grant an exclusive license to the University of Georgia Research Foundation. Application for a Plant Variety Protection Certificate for this cultivar has been filed with the Plant Variety Protection Office in the United States Department of Agriculture.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before October 30, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to: USDA-ARS-Office of Technology Transfer, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Baltimore Boulevard, Building 005, Room 416, BARC–W, Beltsville, Maryland 20705–2350.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew Watkins of the Office of Technology Transfer at the Beltsville address given above: telephone: 301/504–6905.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Federal Government's plant variety protection rights to this variety are assigned to the United States of America, as represented by the Secretary of Agriculture. It is in the public interest to so License this invention, for the University of Georgia Research Foundation has submitted a complete and sufficient application for a license. The prospective exclusive license will be royalty-bearing and will comply with the terms and conditions of 35 U.S.C. 209 and 37 CFR 404.7. The prospective exclusive license may be granted unless, within ninety days from the date of this published Notice, ARS receives written evidence and argument which establishes that the grant of the license would not be consistent with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 209 and 37 CFR 404.7.

R.M. Parry, Jr.,

Assistant Administrator.

[FR Doc. 96–19519 Filed 7–31–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–03–M

Forest Service

Revised Land and Resource Management Plans for the National Forests in Alabama, Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forests, Cherokee National Forest, Jefferson National Forest, and the Sumter National Forest

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare Environmental Impact Statements (NOI).

SUMMARY: Pursuant to 36 CFR 219.10(g), the Regional Forester for the Southern Region gives notice of the agency's intent to prepare Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the revisions of the Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) for the above named National Forests. For the Jefferson National Forest, this notice revises their June 28, 1993 notice of intent to prepare an EIS to revise their Forest Plan. According to 36 CFR 219.10(g), forest plans are ordinarily revised on a 10–15 year cycle. Several amendments have been made to each plan since it originated. The existing forest plans were approved on the following dates:

National Forests in Alabama; March 10, 1986

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests; September 25, 1985

Cherokee National Forest; April 1, 1986

Jefferson National Forest; October 16, 1985

Sumter National Forest; August 2, 1985

The agency invites written comments within the scope of the analysis described below. In addition, the agency gives notice that an open and full environmental analysis and decision-making process will occur on the proposed actions so that interested and affected people are aware of how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: The agency expects to file the draft EISs (DEIS) with the Environmental Protection Agency and make them available for public comment in January of 1998. The Agency expects to file the final EISs in December of 1998. Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received by December 2, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments to Forest Supervisors of the appropriate Forest at the following addresses:

National Forests in Alabama, 946 Chestnut, Montgomery, AL 36107–3010

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, 508 Oak Street, NW, Gainesville, GA 30501

Cherokee National Forest, 2800 N. Ocoee Street (P.O. Box 2010), Cleveland, TN 37320–2010

Jefferson National Forest, 5162 Valleypointe Parkway, Roanoke, VA 24019

Sumter National Forest, 4931 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29210–4021

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

National Forests in Alabama: Planning Team Leader—Rick Morgan—phone: (334) 832–4470

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests: Planning Staff Officer—Caren Brisco—phone: (770) 536–0541

Cherokee National Forest: Planning Staff Officer—Keith Sandifer—phone: (615) 476–9700

Jefferson National Forest: Planning Staff Officer—Kenneth Landgraf—phone: (540) 265–5100

Sumter National Forest: Planning Team Leader—Tony White—phone: (803) 561–4000

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: The Regional Forester for the Southern Region located at 1720 Peachtree Road, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30367, is the responsible official.

Affected Counties

This Notice of Intent affects the following Counties:

National Forests in Alabama: Bibb, Calhoun, Cherokee, Chilton, Clay, Cleburne, Dallas, Hale, Perry, Talladega, Tuscaloosa, Franklin, Lawrence, Winston, Covington, Escambia, and Macon; Alabama.

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests: Banks, Catoosa, Chattooga, Dawson, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Habersham, Lumpkin, Murray, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, Walker, White, Whitfield, Green, Jasper, Jones, Monroe, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Putnam: Georgia.

Cherokee National Forest: Polk, McMinn, Monroe, Greene, Cocke, Unicoi, Sullivan, Washington, Johnson, and Carter; Tennessee.

Jefferson National Forest: Letcher and Pike; Kentucky—Monroe; West Virginia—Bedford, Bland, Botetourt, Carroll, Craig, Dickenson, Giles, Grayson, Lee, Montgomery, Pulaski, Roanoke, Rockbridge, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe; Virginia.

Sumter National Forest: Abbeville, Chester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry, Oconee, Saluda, and Union; South Carolina.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A. Background Information

1. An Ecological Approach to Planning

The general model for an ecological approach to land management planning includes four iterative steps: assessment decision, implementations, and monitoring. The first step involves assessment of the forest situation that characterize the biophysical and social ecosystem components at appropriate temporal and spatial scales. These provide a comprehensive description and evaluation of ecosystem structures, processes, functions, and social and economic conditions that are critical to understanding the present conditions and projecting future trends. From this information, decisions can be made to establish ''desired future conditions'', set goals and objectives, make resource allocations, establish standards and guidelines, determine monitoring requirements, and establish priorities. Following the implementation of those decisions, monitoring and evaluation will determine if changes should be made in the implementation, if there is a need for new decision, or if there is a need to re-assess the situation.

In the Southern Appalachian area, a Southern Appalachian Assessment has been completed. Also completed is the Chattooga Ecosystem Management Demonstration Project (Chattooga Project) which was an effort to consolidate and integrate ecological information for the Chattooga River Watershed which is located at the junction of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia; and includes three National Forests.

Information from these analyses that cross State boundaries and involve multiple National Forests, along with the individual National Forests efforts to update their ''analysis of the management situation'' (AMS), are now being used by these National Forests to determine what decisions in their Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP) should be re-analyzed or changed in revising their LRMPs.

2. The Southern Appalachian Assessment

Recently the U.S. Forest Service has participated in the preparation of the Southern Appalachian Assessment (SAA). The Assessment culminated in a final Summary Report and four Technical Reports that are now available to the public. It was prepared by the U.S. Forest Service (the Southern Region of the National Forest System and the Southern Forest Experiment Station) in cooperation with the other Federal and state agencies that are members of SAMBA (Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Cooperative). The Assessment included National Forest system lands and private lands in the George Washington/Jefferson, Nantahala-Pisgah, Cherokee, and Chattahoochee National Forests; and parts of the Sumter and Talladega National Forests. Also involved were the National Park Service lands in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Shenandoah National Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The Assessment facilitates an interagency ecological approach to management in the Southern Appalachian area by collecting and analyzing broad-scale biological, physical, social and economic data to facilitate better, more ecologically based forest level resource analysis and management decisions. The Assessment was organized around four ''themes''—(1) Terrestrial (including Forest Health, and Plant and Animal Resources); (2) Aquatic Resources; (3) Atmospheric Resources and (4) Social/Cultural/Economic Resources (which includes the Human Dimension; Roadless Areas and Wilderness; Recreation; and Timber Supply and Demand).

As the National Forests in the Southern Appalachians were conducting their forest level efforts to describe their ''Analysis of the Management Situation'' (AMS), they were also providing information for the larger-scale analysis in the Southern Appalachian Assessment.

The Assessment supports the revision of the LRMPs by describing how the lands, resources, people and management of the National Forests interrelate within the larger context of the Southern Appalachian area. The SAA, however, is not a ''decision document'' and it did not involve the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. As broad-scale issues were identified at the sub-regional level (Southern Appalachian Mountain area) in the Assessment, the individual National Forest's role in resolving these broad-scale issues becomes a part of the ''need for change'' at the Forest level.

Public involvement has been important throughout both of these processes. Continuing public involvement leading to formulation of alternatives for the forest plan revision analysis efforts will now be conducted through the ''scoping'' period that follows the issuance of this Notice of Intent.

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

The National Forests in the Southern Appalachian area have applied several efforts to begin their revisions. The main objective thus far has been to do the analysis leading to a proposal to change forest management direction. A key part of that analysis, for significant portions of each of the forests, has been the SAA.

On February 24, 1995, a Notice was placed in the Federal Register (Vol. 60, No. 37) that identified the relationships between the SAA and the Forest Plan revisions of the National Forests in Alabama, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, Cherokee National Forest, and the Sumter National Forest.

A February 24, 1995 Notice in the Federal Register (Vol. 60, No. 37) identified; (1) that the National Forests in Alabama, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, Cherokee National Forest, and the Sumter National Forest were each preparing an Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), and (2) the relationship between the Southern Appalachian Assessment and those efforts. Since then, preparation of a Draft AMSs has included updating resource inventories, defining the current situation, estimating supply capabilities and resource demands, evaluating the results of monitoring, determining the ''Need for Change'' (36 CFR 219.12(e)(5)), review of previous public comments, and public meetings or other outreach. These Draft AMSs are

now available for public review. Together with the results of the SAA, they are the present basis of the issues/Forest Plan decisions that will be examined during the plan revision process. Additional topics will be developed as needed to respond to public comments received on this Notice of Intent during the 120-day public comment period.

In the past, a ''Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement'' was issued prior to the development of the AMS. However, for these Forest Plan revisions, an effort was made to first define the current situation and estimate an ''initial need for change'' in a Draft AMS prior to issuing a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. We hope this will lead to improved ''scoping'', which will help the public provide more concise and specific comments. This should make it possible to develop more responsive alternatives to be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statements accompanying the individual Revised Forest Plans.

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

The Jefferson National Forest previously issued a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its Revised LRMP on June 28, 1993. This NOI revises that earlier notice, and provides notification that the planning process on the Jefferson National Forest will now coincide with the planning process and timelines for the other National Forests in the Southern Appalachians.

Although the George Washington National Forest and the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forests were part of the Southern Appalachian Assessment, they are not beginning plan revisions at this time. The George Washington National Forest completed its Final Revised Forest Plan on January 21, 1993, and the Nantahala-Pasgah National Forests completed a significant amendment, Amendment 5 to their Land and Resource Management Plan on March 18, 1994. However, as information from the Southern Appalachian Assessment and the other National Forest planning process are being analyzed, a need to change these plans may be identified to ensure consistency between the National Forests in the Southern Appalachians.

5. The Role of Forest Plans

National Forest System resource allocation and management decisions are made in two stages. The first stage is the forest plan, which allocates lands and resources to various uses or conditions by establishing management areas and management prescriptions for the land and resources within the plan area. The second stage is approval of project decisions.

Forest plans do not compel the agency to undertake any site-specific projects; rather, they establish overall goals and objectives (or desired resource conditions) that the individual National Forest will strive to meet. Forest plans also establish limitations on what actions may be authorized, and what conditions must be met, during project decision-making.

The primary decisions made in a forest plan include:

(1) Establishment of the forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives (36 CFR 219.11(b)).

(2) Establishment of forest-wide management requirements (36 CFR 219.13 to 219.27).

(3) Establishment of multiple-use prescriptions and associated standards and guidelines for each management area (36 CFR 219.11(c)).

(4) Determination of land that is suitable for the production of timber (16 U.S.C. 1604(k) and 36 CFR 219.14).

(5) Establishment of allowable sale quantity for timber within a time frame specified in the plan (36 CFR 219.16).

(6) Establishment of monitoring and evaluation requirements (36 CFR 219.11(d)).

(7) Recommendation of roadless areas as potential wilderness areas (36 CFR 219.17).

(8) Where applicable, designate those lands administratively available for oil and gas leasing; and when appropriate, authorize the Bureau of Land Management to offer specific lands for leasing. (36 CFR 228.102 (d) and (e))

The authorization of site-specific activities within a plan area occurs through project decision-making, the second stage of forest planning. Project decision-making must comply with NEPA procedures and must include a determination that the project is consistent with the forest plan.

6. The Role of Scoping in Revising the Southern Appalachian Land and Resource Management Plans

This NOI includes a description of the preliminary Issues and ''Proposed Actions'' for the five National Forests in the Southern Appalachians that are revising their LRMPs. The ''Proposed Actions'' are actions within one or more of the plan decisions identified in the purpose and need.

Scoping to receive public comments on the preliminary issues and proposed actions will begin following the publication of this NOI. The public comments received during this comment period will be used to further refine the preliminary issues that should be addressed, the forest plan decisions that need to be analyzed (the ''proposed actions''/''need for change''), and to help define the range of alternatives that will be developed.

For more information on how the public can become involved during the Scoping period, see Section 6 of this NOI.

B. Purpose and Need for Action

This Notice applies to each of the 5 Forest Plans. The need to revise these plans is driven by the changing conditions identified in the SAA and in individual Forest assessments as well as the changing public values associated with these National Forests. These conditions and values make it appropriate that all of these Southern Appalachian Forest Plan Revisions be done simultaneously.

The purpose for revision rests in the requirements of the National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning required by the National Forest Management Act and its implementing regulations contained in Chapter 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, section 219. According to 36 CFR 219.10(g), forest plans are ordinarily revised on a 10–15 year cycle. These five forests are all completing these cycles.

C. Preliminary Issues

1. Introduction

Early in the process there are several sources of what are called ''preliminary issues''. These are issues stated so that the public, when learning about the environmental analysis, can focus their needs and preferences on the forest plan decisions. One source of information leading to issue development has been the Southern Appalachian Assessment. The Assessment has produced some findings and preliminary issues of broad public interest which have implications that must be considered. This consideration may involve one or more or all Forests, depending on the issue. In addition, the Forests, working with their publics, have identified preliminary issues specific to their Forest.

2. Findings of the Southern Appalachian Assessment

The Southern Appalachian Assessment (SAA) provides key information concerning those portions of the National Forests that are within the SAA area that will be used in plan

revisions. The SAA teams compiled existing region-wide information on resource status and trends, conditions, and impacts of various land management activities and resource uses that apply to portions of each of the five forests that are revising Forest Plans. Several preliminary issues are listed that are associated with the findings of the Assessment. The findings include:

Aquatic Resources

Water Quality and Quantity

The Southern Appalachian ecosystem is widely recognized as one of the most diverse in the temperate region. The headwaters of nine major rivers lie within the boundaries of the Southern Appalachians, making it a source of drinking water for much of the Southeast. In addition, as a general finding, there has been a reduction in water use in the Southern Appalachian area.

Preliminary issues or management opportunities:

—Protection, maintenance and improvement of water resources within the SAA area in coordination with multiple use management.
—Coordination of water quality (and quantity on some forests) needs with adjacent forests, land owners and other agencies with water management responsibilities.
—Insuring water quality and quantity needs for channel maintenance and biotic resources.

Stream Condition and Habitat Quality

The SAA aquatics report identified streams, water bodies, and riparian habitat that were degraded to varied extent.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Restoration of degraded streams, habitat and riparian loss.

Protection of Aquatic Species

Diversity of aquatic species across the Southern Appalachian area is high, with a rich fauna of fish, molluscs, crayfish, and aquatic insects. Approximately 39 percent of the SAA area is in the range for wild trout, consisting of 33,088 miles of potential wild trout streams. The three trout species within the SAA area are vulnerable to stream acidification, which is increasing, particularly in the northern part of the Assessment area and higher-elevation streams. The heritage program files indicate there are 190 species that are endangered, threatened, or of special concern within the SAA area. Mussel populations may experience additional declines over the next 30 years in the Tennessee River basin.

Preliminary issues or management opportunities:

—Protection for these aquatic species and maintenance of the water quality supporting them.
—Management for trout in suitable habitat areas.

Human Induced Impacts on Aquatic Resources

Although human activities that impair aquatic habitat have decreased, population growth and concomitant land development have the potential to increase pressure on aquatic resources. More than 80 percent of the river miles in most watersheds representing 75 percent of the river miles in the SAA area are rated as fully supporting their uses (fully supporting is a measure which states that 90 percent of the time the stream meets water quality criteria). Aquatic Resources within the SAA are affected by acid mine waste, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) facilities, sedimentation (in certain localized situations), urban and rural development, and industrial facilities.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—How the National Forests will manage human induced impacts to the aquatic resources.

Atmospheric Resource

Air Pollution

The SAA found that visibility in the Southern Appalachians has decreased since the 1940's as haziness has intensified due mainly to sulfates in the air. Improvements are expected; however, once the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 are implemented. It is expected that there will be a 50 percent reduction in SO_2 emissions nationwide. Acid deposition is also a problem in the region and headwater streams are most susceptible to acidification (see also, aquatic resource discussion). In addition, nitrogen oxide emissions are expected to increase, contributing to visibility impairment, acid deposition, and ground level ozone, which can cause growth reduction and physiological stress in trees. The greatest potential for growth loss due to the ozone concentration is in the northern and southern ends of the Southern Appalachian area and wherever sensitive hardwoods are located at higher elevations. Particulate matter in the air is a concern, while apparently not one that is increasing currently, especially while land managers are anticipating accelerating the use of prescribed fire for numerous purposes.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Adverse effects of air pollution on visibility, nitrogen oxide emissions, and acid deposition.
—Management's increasing use of prescribed fire and particulate matter in the atmosphere.

Social, Cultural, and Economics

Effects on Local Communities

The combined natural resource sector (wood-products manufacturing, forestry, mining, and tourism) provides nearly 10 percent of SAA area employment, 7 percent of wages, and 12 percent of the industry output. The number of employees (including seasonal or part-time) associated with tourism has doubled between 1977 and 1991.

Over 30,000 jobs are directly related to recreation facilities on Federal land. The counties with the greatest number of these jobs are located near the area's two National Parks and the large concentration of National Forests in western North Carolina. Counties with white-water rivers, such as the Chattooga, Nantahala, and Ocoee have seen increases in recreation-related employment.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Resource allocation and its effect on local economies, including stabilizing and helping the economies and social structure of local communities.

Societal Changes in the Southern Appalachian Area

Changes in the social pattern has effects on the management of natural resources in the region. Changing relative values between commodity and non-commodity uses of forest resources and Southern Appalachian ecosystems are cited by the SAA. While not consistent across the Southern Appalachian area, the population has increased 27.8 percent in the region between 1970 and 1990. For natural resource management, however, the increase in the area's population is less significant than the economic development that accompanied the increase and the attitudes and cultural attachment that exists here.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity.

—The mix of natural resource goods and services from National Forest System lands that is sensitive to evolving demographics, attitudes, and needs.

Wood products from public lands

The Federal share of timberland in individual counties ranges up to 69 percent. The decisions made by Federal agencies, therefore, can strongly influence local timber production and the economy in certain parts of the region.

The National Forests hold a large share of high-grade oak sawtimber. Since this is the kind of timber that is in shortest supply and greatest demand, National Forest timber sales can affect the markets for high-quality oak. The terrain in National Forests is more rugged and there are fewer roads, making the timber on these lands more expensive to harvest.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—The role of the National Forests in supplying forest products, and the association of these products to specific Desired Future Conditions on individual Forests.

Recreation settings and use

Only around 8 percent of the Southern Appalachians, including the Great Smokey Mountain National Park, can be classified as having ''remote'' recreation settings. About two-thirds of these settings are on public lands. About 18 percent of the Southern Appalachians are highly developed settings with 2 percent in urban, 4 percent in suburban, and 12 percent in transition of emerging development settings. About 45 prevent of the area is rural, and about 24 percent is natural-appearing forests.

Congestion in recreation use tends to occur on the shores of lakes and streams, because the settings are in high demand. Due to limited sources of supply, settings and facilities for mountain biking, horseback riding, off-highway vehicle driving, and white-water rafting often are congested.

A high proportion of recreation use on Federally owned land occurs at the outer edges of the Appalachian chain. As population centers grow, use patterns will creep toward the center of the mountain ranges.

Wilderness and roadless areas account for 4 percent of all land in the Southern Appalachians. As population increases and urban areas expand, there is concern that the wilderness resource will be affected by overuse.

Preliminary issues or management opportunities:

—The mix of recreation settings on National Forest system lands and the management of each.

—Increasing urbanization of lands adjacent to the National Forests and the effects on Forest Service management.

—Access to public lands.

Roadless and Wilderness

A total of 752,654 acres of inventoried roadless areas were identified in the SAA National Forests ranging in size from 2,035 acres to 27,293 acres and representing 61 percent of all roadless areas within the SAA area.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Management of these and other areas to meet wilderness, recreational, and other resource demands.

Terrestrial—Plant and Animal Resources

Current conditions and trends of forest landscapes

The Southern Appalachian Assessment described current conditions and trends of forested landscapes. These were applied to 9 forest classes and 4 successional classes. The Assessment found that currently National Forests contain 17 percent of the region's forests, 7 percent of the early successional habitats and 42 percent of the late successional habitats.

Currently around 3 percent of National Forest system land is in early successional habitat. This is 4 percent below mid 1970s National Forest levels. There were 10 species associates identified for this habitat. Forty-five percent of the National Forest System lands in the SAA area are in late successional habitat. This represents an increase of 34 percent since 1970.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Desired future conditions for the mix of these habitat conditions must be determined, as well as the larger landscape conditions (forested as opposed to agriculture).

Old Growth forests

Around 1.1 million acres of possible old-growth forest were identified in an initial inventory of SAA National Forests. Patches identified vary from 1 acre to 13,000 acres in size and across a full range of vegetative communities.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Management of these areas, as well as other types of areas, and their spacial allocation to meet the biological, social, and cultural objectives associated with this condition.

Rare Communities

The Assessment found that 31 rare communities are key to the conservation of 65 percent of the Federally listed T&E species and 66 percent of the species with viability concern (globally ranked G1, G2, G3) in the Southern Appalachians. Examples of these rare communities are high elevation grassy and heath balds, mountain longleaf pine woodlands, granitic domes, high elevation rocky summits, and sphagnum and shrub bogs.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Management of rare communities.

Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered (T&E) and Viability Concern Species

The Assessment looks at 51 Federally listed T&E species (11 habitat associations) and the needs of 366 viability concern species (17 habitat associations). While not all of these species and habitats occur on National Forest system lands, the importance of this listing lies in the fact that the Forest Service manages habitat that is often key to preservation and recovery of many species.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Recovery and management of Federally listed T&E species and Forest Service sensitive species.

Game Species

The SAA provided population trends, current status, and some future forecasts for 10 major game species.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—The role of the National Forests in sustaining habitats to support the major game species identified in the SAA for public hunting and viewing.

Black Bear Habitat

The SAA determined that National Forests contain around 4 million acres of potentially suitable black bear habitat, of which about 77 percent has relatively low road density (less than 1.6 miles of road length per square mile) and 51 percent has less than 0.8 miles per square mile. Habitat parameters include open road density, early successional habitats, late successional habitats capable of producing denning sites, and oak mast. Black bear have experienced a moderate range expansion in some parts of the Southern Appalachians over the last 25 years.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—The Desired Future Condition of black bear habitat in the Southern Appalachian National Forests.

Area-Sensitive Forest Bird Habitats

A total of 15.8 million acres of mid- to late-successional deciduous forest

habitat is contained in the SAA area. Approximately 66 percent of these acres are suitable forest interior habitat. Around 8.2 million acres are in forest tracts greater than 5,000 acres in size. These larger tracts have the potential to support all 16 area sensitive landbirds (primarily neotropical migrants). Habitat fragmentation and edge effect were considered. It is estimated that National Forests are currently providing 39 percent of the acreage in these large forest tracts in the SAA area. Taking into account the conditions of the larger landscape, the SAA estimated that around 90 percent of the habitat on National Forest system land is forest interior.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Management of area-sensitive forest bird habitats.

High Elevation Forest Habitats

About 32 percent of the high elevation montane spruce-fir/northern hardwood habitats in the Southern Appalachian area are found on National Forest system land and 23 plant and animal species are included in this habitat association. The Southern Appalachian National Forests are facing possible declines, caused by balsam woolly adelgid and air pollution, in this rare high elevation forest community.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—Possible declines in high elevation forest habitats due to balsam wooly adelgid.

Riparian Habitat

The SAA looked at seeps, springs, and streamside areas. A total 1.5 million acres of these types are in forested cover. Of this, the SAA estimated that National Forests contain around 219,000 acres of forested riparian habitat. The future quality of these habitats is uncertain and may decline due to threats from hemlock wooly adelgid, an exotic insect.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—The Desired Future Conditions for both terrestrial and aquatic riparian habitats, including the specific management of threats to these habitats from hemlock wooly adelgid.

Forest Vegetation Health

The SAA addresses changes in forest vegetation or soil productivity in response to human-caused disturbances or natural processes, potential effects of presence and absence of fire, how the health of the forest ecosystem is being affected by air pollution and native and exotic pests, and how current and past management affecting the health and integrity of forest vegetation in the Southern Appalachians.

The SAA predicts that the European gypsy moth will spread as far south as northern Georgia by the year 2020. Other identified threats to forest ecosystem health include dogwood anthracnose, butternut canker, beech bark disease, southern pine beetle, and asiatic gypsy moth.

Preliminary issue or management opportunity:

—The role of fire in sustaining forest ecosystems.

—Management of identified threats to forest health.

3. Preliminary Issues That May Be Common to the Five Forests

Preliminary issues from the SAA and Forests have been identified that apply to one or more or all of the National Forests in this Notice. Some of these include aquatic resources, forest health, inventoried roadless areas, scenery management, T&E and Sensitive species, terrestrial resources, and wood products. Public response to scoping will be used to develop the actual issues and the forest or forests to which they apply.

4. Preliminary Issues on Individual National Forests

The Southern Appalachian area National Forests have also developed some preliminary issues locally. Since each National Forest must develop its own issues, the following lists will appear in somewhat different formats. The forests will further refine these, incorporate the findings of the SAA and finally, determine the significant issues to carry forward into the NEPA analysis. The following issues are identified by topics and more specific information is available at the individual Forest by contacting the planners listed at the beginning of this Notice.

National Forests in Alabama

Trails and associated facilities and their management
Wilderness area management
Special area designations
Forest cover types, old growth and rotations
Management tools to use in achieving desired future conditions
Mix of goods and services from the Forest
Longleaf restoration for RCW recovery
Habitat types
Fire management
Road density
Land acquisition and exchange

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

Timber management
Road access management and resource protection
Trails
Water quality and increasing forest use
Biological diversity and timber harvesting
Biological diversity, visual quality and hardwood harvesting
Pesticide use and biological and social effects
Balance between rural and urban public demands

Cherokee National Forest

Public road planning, development and management
Timber resource management
Outdoor recreation settings
Trail network management
Forest uses and water quality
Management for biological diversity
Forest health and ecosystems and timber harvesting
Management and scenic attractiveness—landscape patterns
Mix of management intensities across the landscape

Jefferson National Forest

Biological Diversity
- Old growth
- Habitat fragmentation
- Riparian areas/Aquatic ecosystems
- Air quality
- Special interest Areas
- Proposed, endangered, threatened, and sensitive species
- Wildlife and fish management
- Tree health

Wilderness and rivers
- Wilderness
- Wild and Scenic Rivers

Mount Rogers National Recreation Area
Recreation opportunities
- Recreation opportunities

Management practices
- Timber management
- Fire management
- Grazing

Timber production
Transportation system
- Access
- Off-highway vehicles

Minerals, oil and gas
- Oil and gas
- Minerals

Special Uses
Social and economic concerns
- Below cost timber sales
- Subsurface property rights
- Local community economies

Sumter National Forest

Biodiversity
- Variety of communities
- Old growth
- Proposed threatened, endangered, and

sensitive species
Rare and underrepresented plan communities
Riparian areas
Landscape patterns
Role of fires in forest ecosystems
Mineral development
Protection of water and other resource values
Recreation
Mix and emphasis of opportunities
Chattooga Wild and Scenic River values
Timber Management
Lands available for timber management and
Desired timber products

D. Proposed Actions

Each National Forest did an initial analysis of its management situation focusing on changes that have taken place during the current ten-year planning period. During the past decade Forest Plan Amendments, annual monitoring, five year reviews of implementing Forest Plans, and working with the public have provided the Forests with valuable information about changes that are needed in existing Forest Plans. This initiates the determination of the need to establish or change management direction as required under the NFMA regulations at 36 CFR 219.12.(e)(5). From this information each Forest compiled a preliminary list of subject areas, or revision items, which will be used to guide their plan revision. The proposed action is to develop or revalidate goals, objectives, standards and guidelines, and prescriptions.

1. Proposals that are Common to all Five Forests

When revising a forest plan, roadless areas of public lands within and adjacent to the forest shall be evaluated and considered for recommendation for wilderness areas 36 CFR 219.17(a). At least every 10 years each forest must review the designation of lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.14(d). For these forests, the ten-year review is being done in this revision process so all alternatives will evaluate existing suitability designations in light of current conditions. The following list includes additional items that are shared by all of the five National Forests listed in this Notice.

—Establish desired future condition(s), goals, and objectives for resource management.
—Establish, where appropriate, consistent management direction across adjacent National Forest boundaries.
—Establish new management areas;
—Determine suitability of lands for resource management;
—Determine timber allowable sale quantity (i.e., Timber ASQ);
—Analyze and recommend rivers and streams for eligibility and/or suitability for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;
—Replace the current Visual Management System with the new Scenery Management System and establish new visual objectives;
—Adjust the plan monitoring and evaluation requirements to address the elements of the revised plans;
—Identify any needed new special or unique areas;
—Address management needs for all forms of forest access; and
—Address the question of oil and gas leasing on the National Forest system lands.

2. Proposed Actions That are Unique to the Individual Forests

In addition to those items listed in A., above, there are a number of other proposed actions that the individual forests have developed. The following lists are not complete; however, at this point they contain many of the more specific actions that the forests have determined to be important and that should be incorporated in the respective plan revisions. Additional actions will be added and some may be deleted as a result of scoping.

National Forests in Alabama

—Identify, maintain and/or restore the LLP/wiregrass community on the Conecuh National Forest where it is appropriate to do so;
—Address the 3–5 year burning rotation on the sandy soil types found primarily on the Tuskegee and Conecuh Districts and conflicts with ecosystem relationships;
—Incorporate into the Forest Plan, recovery plans for 9 T&E species;
—Incorporate conservation agreements for sensitive species—as needed;
—Incorporate the new RCW EIS into plan revision;
—Examine land ownership adjustment needs across the Forest;
—Incorporate new management direction for over-used areas, especially wilderness areas and trails, and encourage use of alternate trailheads and areas associated with the Sipsey Wilderness;
—Upgrade existing developed recreation sites to meet current standards, and provide greater accessibility for people with disabilities;
—Provide guidance for increased interpretative services and maps for wilderness areas and trails; and
—Provide management direction for regeneration and conversion to address changing conditions/emphases.
—Establish management guidelines for the fisheries program to consider where and when to install habitat structures and to fertilize lakes.
—Establish guidelines for addressing noxious weeds and exotic species, especially where they impact sensitive species or rare communities.
—Determine if grazing should be continued on the Conecuh National Forest, and if it should be woods grazing or pasture grazing.

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

—Establish Forest Plan goals and objectives, and management direction for special forest products (medicinal herbs, craft material, etc.);
—Incorporate management requirements of the Regional Forester's June 1995, decision and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan (when completed) for the red cockaded woodpecker which apply to the Oconee National Forest.
—General forest lands need different management emphasis across the forests. Currently, the general forest area (MA–16) has the same goals and objectives for all lands. This could be true for other MA's as well.
—Clarify the use of timber harvesting to meet Forest Plan goals and objectives. The revised Forest Plan should incorporate standards and guidelines to assist the Districts in determining those conditions and situations that would enable a sale to be classified as forest stewardship (timber purposes, personal use, wildlife habitat, etc.)
—Add timber quality as a objective of timber management.
—Adjust acres on which planned timber harvesting could occur due to reductions for resource protection such as: riparian areas, cultural resources, Proposed, Endangered, and Sensitive Species (PETS), and any other factors which would effectively reduce the suitable land base.
—Establish standards, guidelines, and monitoring requirements for single-tree selection.
—Update direction for timber harvest in riparian areas.
—Establish recreational carrying capacities.
—Establish management direction for the Chattahoochee National Forest to restore appropriate streams to native brook trout.

—Establish management direction for rare communities identified in the Southern Appalachian Assessment.
—Establish coordinated desired future conditions, goals, objectives and direction for the Chattooga River Watershed between the Sumter, the Chattahoochee-Oconee, and National Forests in North Carolina.
—Revise other management direction to incorporate new information about: range management; transportation systems; development of monitoring and recovery plans for PETS; redesign shade protection guidelines for aquatic habitat needs and establish direction for woody debris and aquatic habitat management; review and update air quality direction to clarify needs for Wilderness, non-Wilderness, problem areas, and relationship to State permitting process.

Cherokee National Forest

—Identify special or unique areas, and establish goals for management of such areas;
—Establish guidelines for production of special forest products, and minerals.
—Establish, where appropriate, consistent management direction across adjacent National Forest boundaries.
—Revise guidelines that respond to threats from pests and noxious species.
—Clarify the use of timber harvesting and other planned human-caused disturbances to meet Forest Plan goals and objectives.

Jefferson National Forest

—Develop goals, objectives, standards and guidelines for salvage of dead and dying timber where deemed appropriate. Determine and clearly describe priorities for salvage;
—Consider the effects of long-term fire suppression on ecosystems and the role of prescribed fire as a management tool;
—Address the use and effects of livestock grazing to achieve multiple-use goals and objectives;
—Add direction to provide for new Federal regulations and the 1987 Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act;
—Consider subsurface ownership when evaluating land allocations; and
—Provide minimum management requirements and direction for special uses (e.g., linear rights-of-way, military exercises, electronic sites and commercial services.)

Sumter National Forest

—Coordinate with the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest and the National Forests in North Carolina to establish goals, objectives, and desired future conditions for the Chattooga River Watershed.
—Link land ownership adjustment priorities with desired future condition, goals, and objective establishment.
—Establish, where appropriate, consistent management direction across adjacent National Forest boundaries.
—Consider insect and disease in development and evaluation of alternatives and effects.
—Consider historical Forest budget trends in alternative analysis.
—Incorporate carrying capacity (biological, physical, and social) of the Chattooga River in establishment of desired future condition, goals, and objectives for the Wild and Scenic River.
—Consider ecological classification in developing management areas and desired future conditions.
—Develop desired future conditions that integrate coordinated resource goals and objectives that will facilitate the development of multiple-use projects.
—Revise the monitoring and evaluation direction to include effectiveness monitoring for Forest Plan goals, objectives, and desired future conditions.
—Develop two separate indicator lists (mountains and piedmont) to incorporate new PETS species that are readily monitored, forest interior species, area-sensitive species, and species that may indicate effects at a landscape scale.

E. Preliminary Alternatives

The actual alternatives presented in each forest's draft EIS will portray a full range of responses to issues which are significant on the individual Forest. The five separate draft EIS's will examine the effects of implementing strategies to achieve different desired future conditions for each forest and will develop possible management objectives and opportunities that would move the forests toward desired conditions. A preferred alternative will be identified in each draft EIS.

The range of alternatives presented in each DEIS will include one that continues current management direction and others will also be provided to address the range of issues developed in the scoping process.

F. Involving the Public

The objective in this process for public involvement is to create an atmosphere of openess where all members of the public feel free to share information with the Forest Service and its employees on a regular basis. All parts of this process will be structured to maintain this openess.

The Forest Service is 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 utilized in the preparation of the draft environmental impact statements. The range of alternatives to be considered in the EIS will be based on the identification of significant public issues, management concerns, resource management opportunities, and plan decisions specific to each of the National Forests. Public participation will be solicited by notifying in person and/or by mail, known interested and affected publics. News releases will be used to give the public general notice, and public scoping meetings will be conducted on each National Forest.

Public participation will be sought throughout the plan revision process and will be especially important at several points along the way. The first opportunity to comment will be during the scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7). Scoping includes: (1) Identifying additional potential issues (other than those previously described), (2) from these, identifying significant issues or those which have been covered by prior environmental review, (4) exploring additional alternatives, and (5) identifying potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects).

As part of the first step in scoping, a series of public opportunities are scheduled to explain the public role in the planning process and provide an opportunity for public input. Formats, times and places will vary. These are determined by the individual forest to meet the needs of their publics. For more specific information on times and locations, please contact the Forests. These meetings will occur as follows:

National Forest in Alabama

Proposed Locations and Dates:
Double Springs, Alabama; August 6, 1996
Brent, Alabama; August 8, 1996
Heflin, Alabama; August 13, 1996
Talladega, Alabama; August 14, 1996
Andalusia, Alabama; August 20, 1996
Tuskegee, Alabama; August 22, 1996

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

Proposed Locations and Dates:
Madison, Georgia; September 5, 1996
Gainesville, Georgia; September 7,

1996
Dalton, Georgia; September 10, 1996

Cherokee National Forest

Proposed Locations and Dates:
Elizabethton, Tennessee; October 7, 1996
Greeneville, Tennessee; October 8, 1996
Alcoa, Tennessee; October 10, 1996
Tellico Plains; October 15, 1996
Ducktown, Tennessee; October 16, 1996
Cleveland, Tennessee; October 17, 1996
Nashville, Tennessee; October 21, 1996

Jefferson National Forest

Proposed Location and Date:
Mt. Rogers NRA, Jefferson National Forest, Virginia; August 17, 1996

Sumter National Forest

Proposed Locations and Dates:
Columbia, South Carolina; August 22, 1996
Edgefield, South Carolina; August 26, 1996
Newberry, South Carolina; September 10, 1996
Walhalla, South Carolina; September 21, 1996

G. Release and Review of the EISs

Each Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public comment by January, 1998. At that time, the EPA will publish a notice of availability of each DEIS (one for each Forest's DEIS) in the Federal Register. The comment period on each DEIS will be 3 months 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 the DEIS 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 DEIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) 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 3 month 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 each FEIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed actions, comments on each DEIS 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 DEIS or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statements. 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.

After the comment periods end on each DEIS, the comments will be analyzed, considered, and responded to by the Forest Service in preparing each FEIS. The FEISs are scheduled to be completed in December, 1998. The responsible official will consider the comments, responses, environmental consequences discussed in each FEIS, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making a decision regarding these revisions. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in a Record of Decision for each Forest Plan. Each decision will be subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 217.

The responsible official for each of the Forest Plans is the Regional Forester, Southern Region, 1720 Peachtree Road, NW., Atlanta, Georgia 30367.

Dated: July 25, 1996.

Gloria Manning,

Deputy Regional Forester, NRT.

[FR Doc. 96–19429 Filed 7–31–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

Opportunity for Designation in the Kankakee (IL) Area and the States of California and Washington

AGENCY: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The United States Grain Standards Act, as amended (Act), provides that official agency designations will end not later than triennially and may be renewed. The designations of Kankakee Grain Inspection, Inc. (Kankakee), the California Department of Food and Agriculture (California) and the Washington Department of Agriculture (Washington) will end January 31, 1997, according to the Act, and GIPSA is asking persons interested in providing official services in the Kankakee, California, and Washington areas to submit an application for designation.

DATES: Applications must be postmarked or sent by telecopier (FAX) on or before September 2, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Applications must be submitted to USDA, GIPSA, FGIS, Janet M. Hart, Chief, Review Branch, Compliance Division, STOP 3604, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250–3604. Telecopier (FAX) users may send applications to the automatic telecopier machine at 202–690–2755, attention: Janet M. Hart. If an application is submitted by telecopier, GIPSA reserves the right to request an original application. All applications will be made available for public inspection at this address located at 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., during regular business hours.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Janet M. Hart, telephone 202–720–8525.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This action has been reviewed and determined not to be a rule or regulation as defined in Executive Order 12866 and Departmental Regulation 1512–1; therefore, the Executive Order and Departmental Regulation do not apply to this action.

Section 7(f)(1) of the Act authorizes GIPSA's Administrator to designate a qualified applicant to provide official services in a specified area after determining that the applicant is better able than any other applicant to provide such official services. GIPSA designated: Kankakee main office located in Bourbonnais, Illinois; California main office located in Sacramento, California; and Washington, main office located in Olympia, Washington, under the Act on February 1, 1994.

Section 7(g)(1) of the Act provides that designations of official agencies shall end not later than triennially and may be renewed according to the criteria and procedures prescribed in Section 7(f) of the Act. The designations of Kankakee, California, and Washington end on January 31, 1997.

Pursuant to Section 7(f)(2) of the USGSA, the following geographic area, in the State of Illinois, is assigned to Kankakee: