

National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

I am the responsible official for this environmental impact statement. My address is St. Joe Ranger District, P.O. Box 407, St. Maries, ID, 83861.

Dated: June 23, 1997.

Bradley J. Gilbert,

District Ranger, St. Joe District, IPNF.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Record of Decision for Revision of Black Hills National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan); Black Hills National Forest; Custer, Fall River, Meade, Lawrence, Pennington Counties, SD; Crook and Weston Counties, WY

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of decision.

SUMMARY: On June 24, 1997, Elizabeth Estill, Regional Forester, Rocky Mountain Region, signed a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Revised Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the Black Hills National Forest. This decision rescinds the March 13, 1997 decision revising the Plan because of a problem with an incomplete record. After receiving the full record, and after further consideration, the earlier decision is reissued unchanged. While the new decision makes no substantive change to the prior decision, it does have consequences. The new decision restarts the administrative appeal clock and also the effective date of the Revised Forest Plan.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This decision is effective August 1, 1997 (NFMA, 16 USC 1604(j)). A legal notice is also being published in the Denver Post, Denver, Colorado.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Rupe, Forest Planning Team Leader, 605-673-2251.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On May 28, interested organizations which participated in the public scoping process for the Revision, issued a request to the Chief of the Forest Service to vacate the March 13 Record of Decision (ROD), based, in part, on issues connected to the availability and finalization of the analysis of the public comment record prior to issuance of the decision.

The March 13 ROD discussing public involvement stated: "Individual responses to each comment have been

prepared and are available upon request." When commentors sought copies of these individual responses, the Forest staff discovered that computer software malfunctions had occurred leaving the database incomplete. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that some of the promised individual responses had not even been prepared when the earlier ROD was signed. Upon discovery of the situation, the Regional Forester directed the Forest Supervisor to complete the record and resubmit it for review. The Forest Supervisor submitted the complete record for the Regional Forester's review on June 13.

The following explains the public involvement process to put this decision in context. The Forest Service received approximately 5,400 comments on the Draft Revised Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The comments were reviewed individually and individual responses were to be prepared for the record. However, the Forest Supervisor chose not to include the individual responses to each comment in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). For public disclosure with the FEIS, comments were grouped into subject matter areas along with Forest Service responses to the broader concerns which were expressed.

This evaluation of the public comment was included in Appendix A to the FEIS. This Appendix explained how public comments were evaluated and responses were prepared in accordance to 40 CFR 1503.4(a). The only type of comment which was not fully addressed prior to the March 13 decision was the type that the Forest Service concluded "do not warrant further agency response" under the regulations. The regulations do require that the agency explain why it has concluded that the comments don't warrant further agency response. This step had not been completed for all comments when the earlier ROD was signed. This final step has now been completed.

As a result of an additional interdisciplinary team review, the Forest Supervisor concluded that all comments in the database were addressed in the FEIS or ROD, and recommended to the Regional Forester that individual responses to public comment should not affect the disposition of the March 13 decision.

After reviewing the record, the Regional Forester has concurred with the findings of the Forest Supervisor. Moreover, the Regional Forester has determined that the findings of the review reaffirm the March 13 decision in its entirety.

Following are the specific features of the decision:

- It incorporates the March 13 decision in its entirety, including all rationale, elements, findings and implementation schedules.
- To date, the Forest Supervisor has implemented the revised Forest Plan through the issuance of nine project decisions. All decisions are currently in respective appeal periods and subject to administrative appeal under 36 CFR 217.10(c). None of these actions would be implemented before the effective implementation date of this decision. Moreover, the decision results in no changes or alternations in the Revised Plan or supporting FEIS. Therefore, the Regional Forester has determined that no adjustments or stays of these nine project level analyses or decisions will occur as a part of this action.
- There are an additional six projects with decisions pending. These or any other new decisions issued under the Revised Plan will not be implemented until thirty days from this notice.

The effective implementation date for this decision will occur 30 days from this notice. A legal notice is also being published in the Denver Post, Denver, Colorado.

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 and be filed in duplicate with the Chief, USDA—Forest Service, P.O. Box 96090, NFS, 3NW, Appeals Office, Washington, DC 29909-6090. The appeal must be filed within 90 days from the date this decision is published in the Denver Post. Anyone concerned about the decision is urged to contact the Forest Supervisor before submitting an appeal. It may be possible to resolve the concern in a less formal way.

Dated: June 26, 1997.

Joe L. Meade,

Acting Deputy Regional Forester.

[FR Doc. 97-17276 Filed 7-1-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Housing Service

Notice of Availability of Funding and Requests for Proposals for the Section 538 Rural Rental Housing Guaranteed Loan Demonstration Program

AGENCY: Rural Housing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Housing Service (RHS) announces the availability of the