environmental impact statement (EIS) would be prepared for proposed timber harvest, plantation thinning, fuels reduction, and wildlife habitat improvement projects for areas in the Wolf/Kanaka/Indian Creek and Middle Yuba River watersheds. On March 20, 1998, a revised notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement was published in the **Federal Register** (at 63 FR 13620) that modified the scope of the EIS to just address vegetation management actions and directly connected activities such as fuels treatment and reduction, timber harvesting, and road construction and reconstruction. That notice is hereby cancelled.

After scoping and receiving public comments, we reevaluated and redesignated our proposal so that the proposed activities are now not considered major actions that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. As a result, we are now preparing an environmental assessment instead of an environmental impact statement.

DATES: This action is effective November 20, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gary Fildes, Inderdisciplinary Team Leader, Downieville Ranger District, Tahoe National Forest, 15924 Highway 49, Camptonville, CA 95922, (530) 288–3231.

Dated: November 12, 1998.

Steven T. Eubanks,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 98–31006 Filed 11–19–98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Project EIS

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Regions 4 and 5 will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to amend eleven National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans and the Regional Guides for the Intermountain and Pacific Southwest Regions in response to changed circumstances and new information resulting from the report of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, the Sierra Nevada Science Review, and the Summary of Existing Management Direction. The Land and Resource Management Plans to be amended encompass the Humboldt-Toiyabe, Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, Sierra, Sequoia, and Inyo National Forests, and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

DATES: The public is asked to provide any additional information they believe the Forest Service may still not have at this time, and to submit any issues (points of concern, debate, dispute or disagreement) regarding potential effects of the proposed action or alternatives by January 9, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Steve Clauson, EIS Team Leader, USDA Forest Service, Sierra Nevada Framework Project, Room 419, 801 ''I'' Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Contact Steve Clauson, EIS Team Leader, USDA Forest Service, Sierra Nevada Framework Project, Room 419, 801 ''I'' Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. Phone number—916–492–7554.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

In the Pacific Southwest Region, Region 5 of the Forest Service, a Sierra Nevada-wide planning effort was initiated in 1992 to protect the California spotted owl (CASPO). This planning responded to Forest Service research on the status and viability of the California spotted owl (CASPO Technical Report, 1992). The CASPO report recommended interim management guidelines be adopted to protect California spotted owl populations while a more comprehensive management plan was developed. An environmental assessment to implement interim guidelines was prepared and a Decision Notice approving implementation of interim guidelines was signed on January 13, 1993. To develop a comprehensive management plan, the Forest Service prepared a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the comprehensive management of California spotted owl in 1995. A revised draft EIS was scheduled for release in 1996, however new scientific information came to light and work was suspended pending the report of a Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) that was chartered to review the revised draft EIS. The work of the FAC was influenced by the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP), which produced four volumes of scientific assessments including several papers exploring possible management strategies, and made available large databases and maps for the Sierra Nevada.

The Federal Advisory Committee concluded that the revised draft EIS was inadequate in its current form as either an owl or ecosystem management EIS (''Final Report of the California Spotted Owl Federal Advisory Committee'', USDA, December 1997). The FAC report identified specific critical shortcomings and offered recommendations to address inconsistencies with scientific information, flaws in some key elements of the analysis process, and the need for a more collaborative planning process. The Forest Service has redirected the EIS effort in response to the FAC report and other information.

On July 24, 1998, a team of scientists from the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station, produced the Sierra Nevada Science Review (USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station, July 24, 1998), a review of current scientific information with attention to issues of urgent priority at Sierra Nevada Range-wide scale. A companion document, the Summary of Existing Management Direction, released on August 11, 1998, summarized existing management direction related to issues brought forward in the Science Review. This new scientific information has implications for existing forest plans, social values, and environmental trends in the Sierra Nevada.

The report of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project concludes: ''Most of the problems of the Sierra can be solved, although the timeframe and degree of solution will differ depending on the problem.'' (''Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, Final Report to Congress'', Davis: University of California, Centers for Water and Wildland Resources, 1996.) For many of these problems, a range-wide or multi-forest planning approach is needed.

The Land and Resource Management Plans for the eleven national forests in the Sierra Nevada Range and Modoc Plateau were developed in the 1980's and early 1990's. These plans were independently prepared and adopted in response to concerns at the scale appropriate for each forest. Given the science that recently emerged concerning issues that go beyond the individual forest and ownership boundaries, there is an urgent need to amend the plans to reflect this new information and achieve range-wide consistency. In response to this need, on July 10, 1998 Regional Forester G. Lynn Sprague, in cooperation with Region 4, committed to developing new management direction, where necessary, to address concerns on the Sierra Nevada national forests (63 FR 37314). This EIS is part of the overall Sierra

Nevada Framework for Conservation and Collaboration, which will continue to develop solutions to interagency issues and encourage communication on management of wildlands in the Sierra Nevada Range.

Public Involvement

During 1998, nearly 1,000 people participated in 37 community based workshops to provide their perspectives on the Science Review, the Summary of Existing Management Direction, and other information relevant to the EIS. The majority of the workshops took place in Sierra Nevada communities. A Tribal Summit was held in Tahoe City and a state-wide workshop was held in Davis. Other meetings were held in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Carson City, Nevada. Written comments were submitted at the workshops, on the Internet, and in letters.

People attending the September and October workshops were asked to respond to two questions: (1) Is there other new science relevant to Sierra Nevada national forest management that would cause us to add to or modify the findings in the Science Review, and (2) in light of the Science Review and other new information, what changes would you suggest for management direction in the Sierra Nevada national forests? Responses to these questions, together with the agency's analysis of the new science, information, and legal requirements, were used in framing the proposed action and possible alternatives presented in this Notice of Intent.

In addition to problems or concerns to be addressed in the EIS, many additional concerns surfaced in September and October that are not appropriate to address in the proposed action. Concurrent with this Notice of Intent, the Forest Service has produced a ''Design Paper'' that documents the agency's proposal for addressing concerns outside the scope of the proposed action. The Design Paper is available on the Internet at www.r5.fs.red.us or by request to the Sierra Nevada Framework Project at the address given in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION** section.

Public comments received during this period reflect a wide range of social perspectives. Participants largely agreed on broad conservation principles. There were, however, many different perspectives on how the principles might be implemented. The wide variation of community responses confirmed the need to include local residents, as well as regional and national interests, in the design and refinement of alternatives. Numerous suggestions were made encouraging the Forest Service to work with other federal agencies, Indian Tribes, state and local governments, and organizations to solve Sierra Nevada-wide problems. The recommendations and suggestions received during meeting will be reviewed again during the scoping period.

Each Sierra Nevada national forest will continue dialogues with interested members of the public and other agencies throughout the environmental analysis process. Each forest will host community discussions to explain and hear responses to this Notice of Intent. Workshops will be designed to receive suggestions and recommendations regarding the proposed actions as well as information that could help frame alternatives. Specific locations and dates of the meetings will be posted on the Internet at www.r5.fs.fed.us and in the newspapers of record for each Sierra Nevada national forest.

Scope

The selection of problems for inclusion in the EIS was based on the following criteria: (1) New scientific information is available about the extent, intensity, or duration of the problem, (2) geographic scale is broad, (3) public perception or environmental risk, as judged by the science community, indicates action should be taken now, and (4) the problem is not well addressed elsewhere.

A single EIS amending the eleven forest plans is proposed because: (1) Some problems may only be treatable at a range-wide scale, (2) the public, Indian Tribes, other governmental agencies, and the Forest Service need to consider ways to meet environmental goals common to the eleven forests economically and efficiently, and (3) implementation can be made more accountable and consistent.

Problems that did not meet these criteria will be addressed in the associated activities of the Sierra Nevada Framework. For example, concerns surrounding the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep can be more immediately resolved within the scope of the existing forest plans by increased attention from the five affected national forests in the southern Sierra Nevada.

Problem identified for action in this EIS are:

1. *Old forest ecosystems and associated species.* Old forest ecosystems have declined in quality, amount and connectivity throughout the Sierra Nevada over the past hundred years. Habitats and/or populations of some animals associated with old-forests, including forest carnivores and the California spotted owl, have declined. No regionally consistent direction for old-forest conservation exists.

2. *Aquatic, riparian, and meadow ecosystems.* These ecosystems are the most degraded of all habitats in the Sierra Nevada. Many aquatic and riparian-dependent species (willow flycatcher and amphibians in particular) and communities are at risk. No regionally consistent direction exists to deal with this urgent problem.

3. *Fire and Fuels.* Wildland fire is both a major threat to life, property and natural resources and a critical natural process in the Sierra Nevada. Fire management planning is outdated and not integrated into forest plans.

4. *Noxious weeds.* There is a rapid spread of invasive, exotic plant species that threaten to crowd out native plants and compromise wildland values. Noxious weeds are spreading throughout California and gaining ground at higher elevations in the Sierra Nevada.

5. *Lower westside hardwood forest ecosystems.* Increasing urban development in lower elevations in the Sierra Nevada has fragmented and decreased the amount of hardwood forests. The public has expressed a desire to maintain the remaining extent of hardwood forests for their ecological roles, biodiversity, aesthetics, cultural resources, and for resource uses such as firewood and forage.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve national forest management direction for five broad problems: (1) Conservation of old-forest ecosystems, (2) conservation of aquatic, riparian, and meadow ecosystems, (3) increased risk of fire and fuels buildup, (4) introduction of noxious weeds, and (5) sustaining hardwood forests. Resolution of these problems will influence and be influenced by social, cultural and economic values. The need is to ensure that national forest management direction accounts for current scientific thinking and public expectations, and is consistent among the eleven national forests in practices, procedures, definitions, standards and guidelines.

Current forests plan direction does not reflect the shift in public values and expectations for goods and services from the Sierra Nevada national forests. As the five problem areas are addressed, there is a need to ensure that changes in the level of natural resource products, services, and values, e.g., forage, timber, wildlife, fish, recreation, wilderness, or water, are identified to respond to public concerns with the certainty of

future forest management products and services. In some cases, the lack of certainty has contributed to false expectations about the capability to provide products and services without diminishing long-term productive capability and without violating legal requirements for clean water, clean air, biological diversity, and endangered species.

Three processes are needed to address the problems identified above: adaptive management, landscape analysis, and collaborative interaction with the public.

Adaptive Management. The purpose is to adjust management direction based on results gained through experience. The need is for monitoring protocols that provide timely, accurate information on outcomes achieved by implementing current management direction. As stated in the report of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project: ''All strategies for improvements are in some ways experiments. Learning as we go and adjusting as necessary work best when we give as much care and planning to measuring the response to new management strategies as we do to implementing them.''

Landscape Analysis. The purpose is to consider how management direction at the scale of the forest plan or higher can be applied given landscape conditions at the watershed or subwatershed scale. The need is to identify a suitable set of landscape analysis protocols so that treatment needs can be identified and project priorities set.

Public Interaction and Collaboration. The purpose is to ensure that citizens can meaningfully participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of management direction. Past planning efforts have followed a traditional model that has public input to the planning process only at prescribed intervals with little collaboration. As the report of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project concludes: ''Collaboration among various agencies, private interests, and public at large in the Sierra is the most significant principle that emerges from the SNEP strategies.''

The following are the specific purposes, by problem area, for taking action.

Old Forest Ecosystems and Associated Species. The purpose of the proposed action is to protect, increase, and perpetuate old forest and hardwood ecosystem conditions including their structure, composition, function, and to ensure the maintenance of biological diversity of these ecosystems including the viability of associated species while meeting people's needs and concerns. This will include reversing the declining trends in abundance of old-forest ecosystems and habitats for species that use old-forests.

Aquatic, Riparian, and Meadow Ecosystems. The purpose of the proposed action is to protect and restore aquatic, riparian and meadow ecosystems of the Sierra Nevada national forests. This direction will ensure the proper functioning, such as stable streambanks and shorelines, of key ecosystem processes, such as nutrient cycling, and continued supplies of high quality water and will ensure the maintenance of biological diversity and the viability of species associated with these ecosystems. The purpose is to: (1) Improve consistency of existing conservation programs, strategies and practices, and (2) establish through landscape analysis, a consistent assessment of watershed condition to determine priorities for the allocation of limited personnel and funds.

Fire and Fuels. The purposes are to: (1) bring greater consistency in fire and fuels management across the national forests and coordinate management strategies with other ownerships and with objectives for Forest Service management of other resources, (2) adjust the goals and objectives in the national forest land management plan direction to reflect the role and consequence of wildland fire, and (3) set priorities for fire management actions to balance the need to restore fire regimes while minimizing the threat fire poses to structures, lives and resources.

Noxious Weeds. The purpose is to provide a strategy to control the rapid spread of invasive exotic plant species, to contain existing weed populations and, where possible, to eradicate them.

Lower Westside Hardwood Forest Ecosystems. The purpose of the proposed action is to provide a management strategy that will result in a sustainable hardwood forest ecosystem in the lower westside of the Sierra Nevada, including the structure, composition, and function to ensure maintenance of biological diversity.

Proposed Action

The proposed action responds to the needs identified above, the reports of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project and the Sierra Nevada Science Review, and concerns raised during public workshops held earlier this year. It also responds to the USDA Forest Service Natural Resource Agenda (on the Internet at www.fs.fed.us/news/agenda), the Final Report of the California Spotted Owl Federal Advisory Committee and the Clean Water Action Plan (delivered to Vice President Gore by EPA and USDA on February 19, 1998).

The proposed action, while addressing the five problem areas, integrates multiple uses such as recreation, grazing, timber harvesting, and public access to the national forest into the actions. Sustainable levels of products and services, reflective of shifting public values and expectations, are an integral part of the proposed action. Employment, economic prosperity, community vitality, and the health of resource-based industries were concerns voiced during public comment. They are relevant to all aspects of the proposed action and will be evaluated as alternatives are prepared.

The proposed action calls for application of adaptive management principles to adjust management direction to future events, changing knowledge, or dynamic social views. Adaptive management involves: (1) Establishing desired outcomes and steps towards achieving them, (2) monitoring to generate new information, (3) adjusting management objectives, and (4) adjusting strategies in response to the new information. The proposed action will contain a monitoring strategy to provide the critical information needed to trigger management adaptations.

The proposed action also calls for analysis of environmental conditions and management possibilities at the watershed and sub-watershed scale to: (1) Link decisions at the project scale to larger scale decisions, (2) link forest plans to the efforts of other agencies, (3) prioritize treatments within the watershed or sub-watershed, and (4) facilitate local collaborative stewardship.

The proposed action will be implemented using a collaborative process to ensure coordination and consideration of the needs of other federal agencies, Indian Tribes, state and local governments and individuals. This involvement will help shape national forest land management direction so that ecosystems are restored and maintained while providing the management consistency that allows for a sustainable level of multiple uses, including recreation, grazing, timber, water, mining, and others.

This process will also assure redemption of the government's trust responsibilities with Indian Tribes and consideration of their expertise, cultural needs; and traditional and contemporary uses.

Section 401 of the 1999 Department of the Interior and Related Agencies

Appropriations Act (the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act), 112 Stat. 2681, directs the Secretary to implement a pilot project on certain federal lands within the Plumas, Lassen and Tahoe National forests. The Forest Service will be issuing a Notice of intent for an environmental impact statement to begin implementation of section 401. We will coordinate the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Project Environmental Impact Statement with the environmental impact statement to implement section 401. We would like comments from the public and interested groups concerning the relationship between the two environmental impact statements.

The description of the proposed action for each problem area includes alternative strategies, where they have been identified, that could accomplish the purpose and need for action.

1. Old Forest Ecosystems and Associated Species (Including Forest Carnivores and California Spotted Owl)

The desired condition for Sierra Nevada national forests is to support old forests, which vary by vegetation type at a variety of scales, from individual old conifer or hardwood trees and snags to entire landscapes. Old forest habitat is present in sufficient locations, connectivity, quantities, and quality to sustain viable populations of old forest associated species and allow for seasonal migration of animals. Old forest ecosystems, including associated wildlife, fish, and plant populations, will be resilient to natural disturbance processes such as fire, which serve to sustain ecosystem composition, structure, and function. Management of old forest ecosystems integrates hardwoods and complements the aquatic conservation, fire and fuels, and noxious weeds strategies. Human uses of forests, e.g. recreation, resource uses, and Native American uses, are retained as important considerations for management of old forest ecosystems.

The proposed action is to develop both processes and management standards and guidelines for the California spotted owl and forest carnivores to be integrated with strategies for old forests, aquatic ecosystems, and fire and fuel. These processes, standards, and guidelines would address habitat conservation, modeling, mapping and assessment, and analysis of effects of management actions.

The proposed action is to: (1) Develop consistent old forest definitions by forest type, (2) set mapping standards, (3) adapt management to changing conditions, and (4) standardize large-scale monitoring of old forest ecosystems. The expected result of this action is to increase the acreage supporting old forests and habitat for species that occur there. Two contrasting approaches may be applied to achieve the desired condition.

Landscape Reserve Alternative. The landscape reserve alternative would allocate land as old forest emphasis areas. These reserves would occur over all forest types and include hardwoods as well as conifer-dominated communities. Little to no entry for commercial timber harvest or road building would be allowed in these areas. Prescribed fire would be the primary tool to attain protection and restoration goals. The old forest emphasis areas would be large enough to absorb large-scale natural disturbances, and geographically connected by riparian areas protected in the Aquatic Conservation Strategy to facilitate animal dispersal and contribute toward the continued existence of wide-ranging animals.

Old forest emphasis areas would be selected based upon the following criteria: existing concentrations of old trees; known locations of wildlife, fish and plant populations that require these habitats; low road denisty; habitat for riparian/aquatic species; representativeness of soils, geology, climatic and vegetation conditions; existing wilderness and wild and scenic rivers; likelihood of long-term sustainability given estimated fire conditions.

Outside the old forest emphasis areas, individual large old conifer and hardwood trees, large snags, and concentrations of old trees would be protected wherever they occur in the landscape, except where they pose a safety hazard. Lands would be available for commercial timber harvest and other uses.

Whole Forest Alternative. The whole forest alternative designates the entire hardwood and conifer-dominated forest landscape in the Sierra Nevada for succession towards old forests. Individual large old conifer and hardwood trees and large snags would be protected wherever they occur in the landscape, except where they pose a safety hazard. In roadless areas, concentrations of old trees would be protected by constructing no new roads, and conducting no commercial timber harvest. In roaded areas, concentrations of old trees would primarily be maintained using prescribed fire. Elsewhere in roaded areas, commercial timber harvest, other mechanical treatments, and prescribed fire would be used to accelerate succession toward old forest conditions.

The main differences between the landscape reserve and whole forest alternatives are that under the landscape reserve alternative the location of those reserves would not change over time and no commercial timber harvest would be permitted within the reserves, regardless of current condition. Under the Whole Forest Strategy, no timber harvest would be permitted in existing concentrations of old trees, regardless of location. Two points are common to both strategies: (1) The goal is to increase acreages supporting old forest, and (2) concentrations of old trees would move across the landscape over time in response to large-scale natural or human-generated disturbances.

2. Aquatic, Riparian, and Meadow Ecosystems

The desired condition of the Sierra Nevada national forests will be to provide sustainable aquatic, riparian and meadow ecosystem compositions, structures and functions. Structures include vegetation, flows and stream/lake bottoms. Fire and flooding, and processes such as nutrient cycling, water and sediment flows are within a desired range of variability. Land use activities, such as recreation, hydro-power, grazing, mining, timber harvest, transportation system maintenance and fuel treatments will be managed to enhance and restore the health of these ecosystems. Habitat to support populations of native and desired non-native plant, invertebrate, and vertebrate species will be well-distributed. Watersheds will be connected to each other, allowing fish and wildlife populations to move between them.

The proposed action is to implement an Aquatic Conservation Strategy. This includes a broad-scale assessment to identify the highest quality watersheds, and rare and imperiled wildlife and plant habitats for protection.

Important components of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy will be the integration of existing management practices (i.e., collaboration, restoration, existing watershed conservation practices, adaptive management, monitoring and research), landscape analysis to assess watershed conditions, and establishment of emphasis watersheds and habitats. Criteria for designation of emphasis watersheds and habitats include the presence of native aquatic species; a low level or lack of exotic species; watershed condition; and distribution of, rarity of, and risk to aquatic habitat.

The strategy will include specific standards and guidelines for at-risk frog

and amphibian species. This group includes both foothill (*Rana boylii*) and mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*), California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytoni*), Cascade frog (*Rana cascade*), northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*), and Yosemite toad (*Bufo canorus*). The standards and guidelines will address protecting both occupied and potential habitat from the adverse effects of grazing, mining, reservoir construction, urbanization and other activities.

The willow flycatcher is currently listed by the State of California as an endangered species. Three subspecies occur within California. Two of these subspecies occur in the Sierra Nevada (*Empidonax traillii brewsteri* and *E. t. adastus*) and are listed as Region 5 Sensitive Species. Standards and guidelines for these species will be a subject of the proposed action. A separate subspecies of willow flycatcher (*E. t. extimus*) is listed as federally endangered, occurs at the southern end of the Sierra Nevada, and is not expected to be addressed or affected by this proposed action.

The proposed action is to protect known and potential willow flycatcher habitat from livestock grazing and other management activities through habitat management guidelines. Specific guidelines could include preventing cattle and sheep grazing in willow flycatcher habitat during the breeding season and managing grazing intensity to avoid adverse impacts to vegetation needed for nesting and foraging.

Also included in the guidelines will be measures to: (1) Promote the improvement and expansion of suitable habitat, (2) minimize the likelihood of nest parasitism by brownheaded cowbirds, and (3) require annual surveys to monitor breeding success and habitat conditions.

Two alternative approaches may be applied to implement the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, however both of these approaches will include the strategy for amphibian species and willow flycatcher as described above.

Range-wide Standards. Under this approach, Sierra Nevada-wide standards and guidelines will be developed to be consistent across the province, forest, watershed and project scales. These include delineation of riparian reserves; location, maintenance and engineering of roads; design of timber harvest units; and grazing, recreation, and fuels treatments.

Site Specific Standards. Under this approach, management activities will be determined only after a landscape analysis identifies actions that are most appropriate and effective. In the absence of site specific standards, range-wide standards and guidelines will apply.

3. Fire and Fuels

The desired condition is to have a cost-effective fire management program that protects natural resources, life, and property from the effects of unwanted wildland fire. Fuels are maintained at levels commensurate with minimizing resource loss from fire while meeting other requirements for overall ecosystem health. Fire, under prescribed conditions, is one of the most important tools for restoration and sustainability of ecosystem diversity and productivity. Fire management is coordinated with the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Indian Tribes, Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and other agencies and jurisdictions.

The proposal is to implement a fire management plan for each of the eleven national forests that demonstrates consistency with the Federal Wildland Fire Policy and coordinates with the California Fire Plan prepared by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. A fire management plan is a strategic plan that defines a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires and documents implementation strategies for the fire management program in the approved forest plan.

All fire plans will be supplemented by a range-wide, interagency assessment of flammability and fire risk. This assessment will be based on existing interagency mapping of surface fuels and vegetation, on fire history (location and size of historical fires), and will be adjusted using other factors that affect fire behavior such as weather, climatology, slope and aspect. It displays the likelihood that fires will occur and suggests how large and intense they could be under existing conditions.

This assessment will help guide the setting of priorities for wildland fire management and fire hazard reduction. Priorities should include location of areas of high resource values, reintroduction of fire as an ecosystem process, effects on local economies and impacts on air quality.

Two alternative strategies for priority setting are proposed.

Prescribed Fire and Natural Wildland Fire Use With Focused Use of Mechanical Treatments. Treat fuel accumulations and restore ecosystems primarily through the use of prescribed and natural wildlife fire. Use mechanical treatments along the urban wildland interface and major transportation routes.

Prescribed Fire and Natural Wildland Fire With Extensive Use of Mechanical Treatments. Use prescribed and natural wildland fire to maintain treated areas and to reintroduce fire. Where fuel accumulations, smoke management restrictions, or other concerns preclude the use of prescribed fire as a means to deal with fuels management or the risk of high intensity wildfire, use mechanical methods to create a network of interspersed shaded fuelbreaks and area-wide treatments consistent with fire management priorities.

4. Noxious Weeds

The desired condition is for no new populations of noxious weeds. Existing populations are contained and, where possible, eradicated. Employees, users of National Forest System lands, adjacent landowners, and State agencies are aware and informed about noxious weed concerns.

The 1995 Forest Service Manual direction for noxious weed management will be incorporated into all alternatives developed in the EIS. Also, because noxious weed control and eradication is a Region-wide effort, management directions developed for the Sierra Nevada forests will be integrated at the Regional scale and coordinated with other land management agencies in California.

Alternatives will contain management direction to minimize the spread of noxious weed by roadbuilding, livestock use, vehicle use, equipment use and other carriers. California wildland fire fighting agencies would be encouraged to inventory and adopt use of weed-free fire camps. Direction will also be included to ensure weed-free administration sites and that materials brought onto the national forests (e.g., sand, gravel, and pack animal's feed) will be weed-free. All alternatives will include direction to use State certified ''noxious weed-free'' materials as soon as the State program is in place.

Monitoring and inventory programs for noxious weed populations will be tied to monitoring that triggers shifting the nature and intensity of actions. Monitoring results and inventories will be shared across agencies and national forests. The range-wide efficiency of the control program would be periodically evaluated.

5. Lower Westside Hardwood Forest Ecosystems

The desired condition is for the lower westside hardwood forests to be present in sufficient locations, connectivity, quantities, and quality to provide for public uses, resident wildlife fish and acquatic species, sensitive plant species

and seasonal migrants including deer. Fire will be employed to maintain both old tree dominated forests and a mosaic of hardwood stand ages across the landscape. Connectivity between lower elevation hardwood and upper elevation conifer forests will be sufficient to allow for wildlife migration and for natural processes, such as wildland fire, to occur. Collaboration with local land owners and governments, and consultation with tribes and permittees, will be an integral part of managing these areas.

The proposed action is a management strategy that will ensure lower westside hardwood forests are sustained. This strategy complements the old-forest, aquatic conservation, fire and fuels, and noxious weeds strategies. Individual large trees and snags, and concentrations of old trees will be protected consistent with the old-forest ecosystem strategy. A mosaic of hardwood stand ages will be provided through reintroduction of fire, where possible, or through other fuels reduction techniques in compliance with the fire and fuels strategy. Management practices for improving connectivity between hardwood and conifer forests and for reducing the impacts of urban development to hardwood ecosystems will also be included. Viable populations of plants and animals associated with hardwood forests would be sustained, to the extent feasible in light of the fragmentation of these forests. The monitoring strategy will be designed to ensure the management strategy is effective in sustaining lower westside hardwood forests.

Proposed Scoping Process

This Notice of Intent initiates the scoping process whereby the Forest Service will identify the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS and identify the significant environmental issues related to the proposed action.

Public comment is invited on the proposal to prepare the EIS. Comment is also invited on the relationship between the EIS and section 401 of the 1999 Department of Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (the Herger-Feintstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act), 112 Stat. 2681.

Community meetings with interested publics will be hosted by each Sierra Nevada national forest during scoping, after release of the Draft EIS, and after release of the Final EIS. Coordination with Federal and State agencies, Tribal governments, and local governments will occur throughout the scoping process.

During December 1998, the eleven national forests will each host workshops designed to explain the Notice of Intent. In January 1999, community workshops will be held to solicit suggestions, recommendations, and comments to help frame alternatives to the proposed action. Workshops will also be held in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Specific locations and dates of the meetings will be posted on the Internet at www.r5.fs.fed.us and in the newspaper of record for each Sierra Nevada national forest.

Decision To Be Made and Responsible Official

The Regional Foresters of Regions 4 and 5 will decide, for their respective Regions, whether or not, and in what manner, to amend the Land and Resource Management Plans for the eleven Sierra national forests; Humboldt-Toiyabe, Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, Sierra, Sequioa, Inyo, and Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. Also, the decision could include a non-significant amendment to the Regional Guides for the Intermountain and Pacific Southwest Regions. The responsible officials are Regional Foresters Jack A. Blackwell, Region 4, USDA Forest Service, Federal Building 324, 25th Street, Ogden, UT 84401 and G. Lynn Sprague, Region 5, USDA Forest Service, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94111.

Coordination With Other Agencies

While the Forest Service is the lead agency with responsibility to prepare this EIS, requests have been made of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and California Department of Fish and Game to participate as cooperating agencies (40 CFR Part 1501.6). The Environmental Protection Agency and Fish and Wildlife Service have regulatory responsibilities that could not efficiently be considered without direct involvement; formal consultation responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act will be carried out by having a Fish and Wildlife Service specialist participate as a member of the interdisciplinary team. Cooperation by the National Marine Fisheries Service is being sought. Coordination with the California Department of Fish and Game and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is necessary because some mission responsibilities overlap or are closely aligned with the conservation activities of the Forest Service. Negotiations with the California Department of Parks and Recreation to seek their cooperation is also underway. Each agency will continue to participate as resources and competing demands permit. Other agencies, local and county governments will be invited to comment, as appropriate.

Commenting

A draft environmental impact statement is expected to be available for public review and comment in February 1999; and a final environmental impact statement in July 1999. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 90 days from the date of availability published in the **Federal Register** by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

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 the 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 stage 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 (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 90 day 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 the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on 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.

Dated: November 16, 1998.

Kent Connaughton,

Deputy Regional Forester.

[FR Doc. 98–31022 Filed 11–19–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List; Proposed Additions

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Proposed Additions to Procurement List.

SUMMARY: The Committee has received proposals to add to the Procurement List a commodity and services to be furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE: December 21, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, Crystal Gateway 3, Suite 310, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22202–4302.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Beverly Milkman (703) 603–7740.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice is published pursuant to 41 U.S.C. 47(a)(2) and 41 CFR 51–2.3. Its purpose is to provide interested persons an opportunity to submit comments on the possible impact of the proposed actions.

If the Committee approves the proposed additions, all entities of the Federal Government (except as otherwise indicated) will be required to procure the commodity and services listed below from nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities. I certify that the following action will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. The major factors considered for this certification were:

1. The action will not result in any additional reporting, recordkeeping or other compliance requirements for small entities other than the small organizations that will furnish the commodity and services to the Government.

2. The action will result in authorizing small entities to furnish the commodity and services to the Government.

3. There are no known regulatory alternatives which would accomplish the objectives of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (41 U.S.C. 46–48c) in connection with the commodity and services proposed for addition to the Procurement List. Comments on this certification are invited. Commenters should identify the statement(s) underlying the certification on which they are providing additional information.

The following commodity and services have been proposed for addition to Procurement List for production by the nonprofit agencies listed:

Commodity

Pad, Fingerprint,
7520–00–117–5627
NPA: Cattaraugus County Chapter, NYSARC, Olean, New York.

Services

Janitorial/Custodial, DLA Baton Rouge Depot, 2695 N. Sherwood Forest Drive, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, NPA: Louisiana Industries for the Disabled, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Janitorial/Custodial, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Building 357, Kittery, Maine, NPA: Goodwill Industries of Northern New England, Portland, Maine.

Beverly L. Milkman,

Executive Director.

[FR Doc. 98–31090 Filed 11–19–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6353–01–P

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List; Additions and Deletions

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Additions to and Deletions from the Procurement List.

SUMMARY: This action adds to the Procurement List a commodity and services to be furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities, and deletes from the Procurement List commodities previously furnished by such agencies.

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 21, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, Crystal Gateway 3, Suite 310, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22202–4302.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Beverly Milkman (703) 603–7740.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

On September 18 and October 9, 1998, the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled published notices (63 FR 49896 and 54436) of proposed additions to and deletions from the Procurement List:

Additions

After consideration of the material presented to it concerning capability of qualified nonprofit agencies to provide the commodity and services and impact of the additions on the current or most recent contractors, the Committee has determined that the commodity and services listed below are suitable for procurement by the Federal Government under 41 U.S.C. 46–48c and 41 CFR 51–2.4.

I certify that the following action will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. The major factors considered for this certification were:

1. The action will not result in any additional reporting, recordkeeping or other compliance requirements for small entities other than the small organizations that will furnish the commodity and services to the Government.

2. The action will not have a severe economic impact on current contractors for the commodity and services.

3. The action will result in authorizing small entities to furnish the commodity and services to the Government.