

publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 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 45 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider 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.

The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in June or July 1999. In the final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to comments and responses received during the comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the draft EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making the decision regarding this proposal. The Responsible Official is Robert L. Vaught, Forest Supervisor, 765 South Main, Colville, WA 99114, phone: 509-684-7000, fax: 509-684-7280. As the responsible official he will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest

Service Appeal Regulations, 36 CFR part 215.

Dated: December 14, 1998.

Robert L. Vaught,

Forest Supervisor, Colville National Forest.

[FR Doc. 98-34094 Filed 12-23-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Goodenough Vegetation Management Project; Caribou National Forest, Bannock County, ID

AGENCY: Forest Service.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The USDA, Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to document the analysis and disclose the environmental impacts of proposed actions to thin timber stands in the Goodenough and Mormon Canyons on the Westside Ranger District of the Caribou National Forest. The need for the proposal is to improve the condition of the vegetation and maintain other resource values. The trees in these standards are growing too close together, forcing them to compete for sunlight, moisture and nutrients. Thinning the live trees will free up needed moisture, nutrients and sunlight for the remaining trees which will allow them to better resist insect attacks and improve the condition of the vegetation. Opening up these stands and removing some of the merchantable dead trees will help reduce large wildfire potential and create stand conditions which better approximate timber stand conditions before fire prevention was practiced.

The Westside Ranger District of the Caribou National Forest proposes to thin stands of trees on the north facing slopes of Goodenough and Mormon Canyons. Commercial and precommercial thinning will be used to improve stand conditions and salvage high risk trees. Approximately 26 stands are proposed for treatment on approximately 500 acres. Because of steep slopes and identified resource concerns, helicopters will be used for commercial thinning, and hand crews will be used for precommercial thinning. No new roads are planned, although there may be some improvement to switchbacks on the existing road. Best Management Practices, Caribou Land and Resource Management Plan "Standards and Guides", and current management

direction will be met during project implementation.

DATES: Written comments concerning the scope of the analysis described in this Notice should be received by January 25, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Caribou National Forest, Westside Ranger District, 250 South Fourth Ave., Federal Building Suite 187, Pocatello, Idaho 83201.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Questions concerning the proposed action and EIS should be directed to Michele Lawson, Project Leader, or Jerald Tower, Westside District Ranger, Caribou National Forest (Telephone: (208) 236-7500).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This EIS will tier to the final EIS for the Caribou National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The Caribou National Forest Plan provides the overall guidance (Goals, Objectives, Standards, and Management Area direction) to achieve the Desired Future condition for the area being analyzed and contains specific management area prescriptions for the entire Forest. The current management prescription for the area is water yield. During the analysis it will be determined if the current management prescription is appropriate or if a different prescription is more appropriate.

Possible alternatives to the proposal are not to treat any timber stands or to treat only some of the stands at this time.

Public scoping letters have been sent to individuals, and published in the Idaho State Journal. Initial scoping comments indicated concerns about the project's impacts on water quality and roadless area characteristics. At this time, no public scoping meetings have been planned.

Preliminary issues and concerns identified to date are:

1. The proposed project is located in the Scout Mountain Roadless Area, #04152. The environmental analysis will need to determine how the proposed action may affect existing roadless characteristics.

2. Beneficial uses must be protected and regulatory water quality standards met.

3. Damage to existing roads in the project area could occur from logging truck traffic.

4. The project may affect wildlife habitat.

5. Snag and potential snags should be retained for cavity dependent species.

6. Without treatment, timber stands may have increased insects and disease occurrence.

7. The project proposal may affect timber stand productivity.

8. The project proposal may affect timber stand vigor.

9. The project proposal may affect how wildfires will burn through the project area.

10. The project proposal may not be physically feasible due to the existing terrain.

11. The project proposal may not be economically feasible for helicopter logging.

12. Project proposal needs to address the safety of recreational users during the timber harvest.

13. Project proposal may increase the potential for avalanche damage to resources.

A Biological Assessment of threatened, endangered and proposed species will be completed as part of the environmental analysis. A Biological Evaluation will be completed as part of the environmental analysis and documented in the EIS.

A Cultural Resource Survey of the area will be completed as part of the environmental analysis, and any cultural resources found would be protected.

No permits or licenses are required to implement the proposed action.

The tentative date for filing the Draft EIS is May 1999. The tentative date for filing the final EIS is August 1999. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be open for 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions.

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp v. NRDC, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also environmental objections that could be

raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F. 2d 1016, 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 45-day comment period of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement 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. Agency representatives and other interested people are invited to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the EIS process.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments 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. 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.

The USDA, Forest Service is the lead agency in preparing the Environmental Impact Statement for this proposal. The responsible official is Jerry B. Reese, Forest Supervisor, Caribou National Forest, 250 South Fourth Avenue, Federal Building, Pocatello, ID 83201.

Dated: December 14, 1998.

Jerry B. Reese,

Forest Supervisor, Caribou National Forest.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Committee of Scientists Meeting

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Committee of Scientists will hold a public teleconference call on Thursday, January 7, 1999. The teleconference call will begin at 12 p.m. and end at 4 p.m. (eastern standard time). The purpose of the telephone conference call is for the Committee of Scientists to continue discussion of its report and recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the Forest Service. The public is invited to attend this teleconference call and may be provided an opportunity to comment on the Committee of Scientists' deliberations during the teleconference, only at the request of the Committee.

DATES: The teleconference call will be held on Thursday, January 7, 1999, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. (eastern standard time).

ADDRESSES: The teleconference will be held at the USDA Forest Service headquarters, Auditor's Building, 201 14th Street, SW., Washington, DC, in the Roosevelt Conference Room and at all Regional Offices of the Forest Service, which are listed in the table under Supplementary Information.

Written comments on improving land and resource management planning may be sent to the Committee of Scientists, PO Box 2140, Corvallis, OR 97339. Also, the Committee may be accessed via the Internet at www.cof.orst.edu/org/scicomm/.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

For additional information concerning the teleconference, contact Bob Cunningham, Designated Federal Official to the Committee of Scientists, by telephone (202) 205-1523.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The public may attend the teleconference at the following field locations:

USDA FOREST SERVICE REGIONAL OFFICE LOCATIONS

Region 1—Northern Region	Federal Building, 200 E Broadway	Missoula, MT
Region 2—Rocky Mountain Region	740 Simms St	Golden, CO
Region 3—Southwestern Region	Federal Building, 517 Gold Ave., SW	Albuquerque, NM
Region 4—Intermountain Region	Federal Building, 324 25th St	Ogden, UT
Region 5—Pacific Southwest Region	630 Sansome St	San Francisco, CA
Region 6—Pacific Northwest Region	333 SW 1st Ave	Portland, OR
Region 8—Southern Region	1720 Peachtree Rd. NW	Atlanta, GA
Region 9—Eastern Region	310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Room 500	Milwaukee, WI
Region 10—Alaska Region (office will open early)	Federal Office Building, 709 W. 9th St	Juneau, AK