

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[Docket No. 99-007N]

National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) will hold a public meeting on February 24-26, 1999 to review and discuss ongoing and completed issues on meat and poultry, fresh produce, and Codex.

DATES: The full committee will meet at 8:30 a.m. on February 24, 1999. On February 25, the subcommittees will meet, and the full committee will reconvene on February 26.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Doubletree Hotel Park Terrace on Embassy Row, 1515 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Persons interested in making a presentation, submitting technical papers, or providing comments should contact Ms. Amelia L. Wright, Advisory Committee Specialist, Scientific Research Oversight Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, Suite 6913, Franklin Court, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700, by mail or FAX (202) 501-7366. Comments and requests may be provided by E-mail to amelia.wright@usda.gov. Written comments may be submitted to the FSIS Docket Clerk, 102 Cotton Annex Building, 300 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700. Persons requiring a sign language interpreter or other special accommodations should notify Ms. Wright by February 15, 1999.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In addition to reviewing issues regarding meat, poultry, fresh produce, and Codex, the Committee will receive new requests from the sponsoring agencies. Dr. I. Kaye Wachsmuth, Deputy Administrator, Office of Public Health and Science, FSIS, will be the Committee Chair.

NACMCF provides advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Health and Human Services on the development of microbiological safety and wholesomeness of food by assessing available data as it relates to the human health consequences of food safety. The Committee also provides guidance to the Departments of Commerce and Defense.

Done at Washington, DC, on February 11, 1999.

Thomas J. Billy,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 99-3962 Filed 2-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-DM-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service****South Fork Burnt River Range Planning on the Unity Ranger District, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Baker County, Oregon**

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The USDA, Forest Service, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to update range management planning on five (5) livestock grazing allotments which will result in the development of new Allotment Management Plans (AMPs). The allotments are West Burnt River, North Fork Burnt River, Powell Gulch, South Burnt River and Bullrun. The allotments are located approximately 50 miles, by road, southwest of Baker City, Oregon. The allotments, combined, are called the South Fork Burnt River Range Planning Area. National Forest System lands within the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will be considered in the proposal. Management actions are planned to be implemented beginning in the year 2000. The agency gives notice of the full environmental analysis and decision-making process that will occur on the proposal so that interested and affected people may become aware of how they may participate in the process and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by March 26, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments and suggestions concerning this proposal to Deborah G. Schmidt, District Ranger, Unity Ranger District, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, P.O. Box 38, Unity, Oregon 97884.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Direct questions about the proposed action and EIS to Paul Bridges, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Baker Ranger District, 3165 10th Street, Baker City, Oregon 97814, phone (541) 523-1950.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed action is to continue to permit livestock grazing on National Forest System lands. The proposed action is

designed to continue the improving trends in vegetation, watershed conditions, and in ecological sustainability relative to livestock grazing within the five allotments of the South Fork Burnt River Watershed. The action is needed to develop new AMPs which incorporate results of recent scientific research, analysis and documentation at the sub-basin level.

The Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan as amended, recognized the continuing need for forage production from the Forest and recognized the five allotments of the South Fork Burnt River watershed as containing lands which are capable and suitable for grazing by domestic livestock. This action is needed to continue this historic use.

The allotments are located within the Bullrun Creek, Job Creek, East Camp Creek, Lower West Camp Creek, Upper West Camp Creek, Middle Fork Burnt River, Pole-Sheep Creeks, South Fork Burnt River, Elk Creek, North Fork Burnt River, and the West Fork Burnt River subwatersheds on the Unity Ranger District. These subwatersheds are contained within the South Fork Burnt River, North Fork Burnt River and Camp Creek Watersheds.

The Forest planning process allocated specific management direction across the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Within the area encompassed by the five allotments, management areas (MA) include MA1 (timber production), MA3 (wildlife/timber), MA4 (wilderness), and MA6 (backcountry).

The five allotments encompass approximately 77,000 acres of National Forest System Lands, with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private land making up an additional 8,100 acres within the Powell Gulch, North Fork Burnt River, and South Burnt River allotments. Important riparian areas occur in three of the allotments: Bullrun, South Burnt River and West Burnt River. Other points of interest in the allotments are as follows: in the Bullrun allotment, a portion of the Monument Rock Wilderness occurs; in the South Burnt River allotment, a multi-campground fenced enclosure occurs along the river which provides a livestock free recreation area and helps to improve riparian conditions on that portion of river; within the West Burnt River allotment, there is a Bald Eagle Management Area and many fenced enclosures exist which contribute to improving trends for many portions of the river.

The South Fork Burnt River Range Planning Area provides habitat for many wildlife species including management indicator species (MIS) and their

habitats. These MIS species include California wolverine, North American lynx, Rocky Mountain elk, marten, pileated woodpecker, goshawk, bald eagle and American peregrine falcon. Fish species within the planning area include native populations of inland redband/rainbow trout, brook trout; and other non-game species such as dace, redband shiner, and sucker.

Preliminary issues include: (1) The effects of livestock grazing on riparian conditions (including water quality, water temperature and stream bank stability); (2) the ability to maintain ecological sustainability and continue watershed restoration with continued livestock grazing; (3) the effects of no grazing or reduced grazing on the local economy; (4) the reduction in soil productivity and in amounts of native bunchgrass forage due to the encroachment of juniper trees onto rangelands; and (5) the effects of livestock grazing on TES species.

A detailed public involvement plan has been developed, and an interdisciplinary team has been selected to do the environmental analysis, prepare and accomplish scoping and public involvement activities.

The proposed action is intended to provide the analysis needed to prepare new AMPs that meet all the Forest Plan amended requirements of Inland Native Strategies for Managing Fish-producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, Western Montana and Portions of Nevada (INFISH) and are consistent with the scientific findings of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Program (ICBEMP). Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), will be completed on all proposed activities.

Public involvement will be especially important at several points during the analysis, beginning with the scoping process. The Forest Service will be consulting with Indian Tribes and seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, local agencies, tribes, and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposals. The scoping process includes:

1. Identifying and clarifying issues.
2. Identifying key issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Exploring alternatives based on themes which will be derived from issues recognized during scoping activities.
4. Identifying potential environmental effects of the proposals and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects and connected actions).

5. Determining potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

6. Developing a list of interested people to keep apprised of opportunities to participate through meetings, personal contacts, or written comments.

7. Developing a means of informing the public through the media and/or written material (e.g., newsletters, correspondence, etc.).

Public comments are appreciated throughout the analysis process. The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and be available for public review by September 1999. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**. The final EIS is scheduled to be available March 2000.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice of this early stage of public participation and of several court rulings related to public participation the environmental review process. First, reviewers of a draft EIS 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 have been raised at the draft stage may be waived or dismissed by the court if not raised until after completion of the final EIS. *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 substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider and respond to them in the final EIS.

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

In the final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to substantive 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 a decision regarding the proposal. The Responsible Official is Karyn L. Wood, Forest Supervisor for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The Responsible Official will document the decision and rationale for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to appeal under 36 CFR Part 215.

Dated: February 9, 1999.

William R. Gast,

Deputy Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 99-3936 Filed 2-17-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Joseph Creek Range Planning on the Wallowa Valley Ranger District, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Wallowa County, Oregon

AGENCY: Forest Service USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to update range management planning on 11 livestock grazing allotments and 1 administrative horse pasture which will result in the development of new Allotment Management Plans. The grazing allotments are named Al-Cunningham, Cougar Creek, Crow Creek, Davis Creek, Fine, Hunting Camp, Swamp Creek, Table Mountain, Joseph Creek, Dobbins, and Elk Mountain and the administrative horse pasture is named Upper Chico. The allotments are located 70 miles north and east of LaGrande, Oregon. The allotments, combined, are called the Joseph Creek Range Planning Area. National Forest System lands within the Wallowa-Whitman National Forests, will be considered in the proposal. Management actions are planned to be implemented beginning in the year 2000. The agency gives notice of the full environmental analysis and decision-making process that will occur on the proposal so that interested and affected people may become aware of how they may participate in the process and contribute to the final decision.