be interested or affected by the proposed projects. Additional input will be used to help identify key issues and develop alternatives. This input will be used in preparation of the draft EIS.

The Forest Service expects to file the draft EIS with the Environmental Protection Agency and have it available for public review by August 20, 1999. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency's notice of availability appears 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 DEISs must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts the agency to the reviewers' positions and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Power Corp.* v. *NRDC,* 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, courts may waive or dismiss 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). *City of Angoon* v. *Hodel,* 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritagees, 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 FEIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible. 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 Responsible Official is David F. Alexander, Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest, McCall, ID 83638.

Dated: July 2, 1999.

David F. Alexander,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 99–18013 Filed 7–14–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Otter Lake Timber Sale(s), Tongass National Forest; Hoonah Ranger District, Alaska

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental effects of proposed actions within the Otter Lake Project Area. The proposed action provides for: (1) Harvest of seven units covering 588 acres, from a unit pool of 14 units totalling 849 acres and containing 19.4 million board feet, and regeneration of new stands of trees; (2) construction of 3.2 miles of specified road and 0.5 miles of temporary road, as well as reconstruction of 2.5 miles of specified road; and (3) the use of the existing log transfer facility at Eight Fathom Bight (terminus of Forest Development Road 8580). This level of development would result in the harvest of an estimated 12.4 million board feet of sawlog and utility timber volume over a three year period following the approval of this document and award of contract(s). The proposed action is one alternative to achieve the purpose and need for this project. A map of the unit and road pool, and the proposed action, is available from the address provided.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by August 23, 1999.

LEAD AGENCY: USDA Forest Service, Tongass National Forest.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Otter Lake Planning Team, USDA Forest Service, 204 Siginaka Way, Sitka, Alaska 99835.

COOPERATING AGENCIES: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will be invited to participate as Cooperating Agencies.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael E. Fox, USDA Forest Service, 204 Siginaka Way, Sitka, Alaska 99835, (907) 747–4328, e-mail at mfox/r10__chatham@fs.fed.us or FAX at (907) 747–4281.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

This environmental impact statement (EIS) will tier to the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement and Modified 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (April 1999 Record of Decision). The Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (TLRMP) provides the overall guidance (Goals, Objectives, Standards, Guidelines, and Management Area direction) to achieve the desired condition for the area in which the project is proposed.

The EIS will be prepared by a contractor working under the supervision of the Forest Service. Work to be done by the contractor includes the field investigations, development of resource reports, preparation of a draft EIS, and the preparation of the final EIS. The Forest Service will prepare the Record of Decision. The Forest Service will provide oversight and review at all steps of the process.

The Otter Lake Project Area is located about 60 air miles north of Sitka, Alaska and 12 air miles west of Hoonah, Alaska. The project area (7,580 acres) is located on north Chichagof Island, just north of Neka Bay, and north and west of Port Frederick. The project area encompasses part or all of R 59 E, T 43 S, Sec. 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, & 36; R 59 E, T 44 S, Sec. 1 through 18, 20, & 21, and R 60 E, T 45 S, Sec. 6 (Eight Fathom Bight Log Transfer Facility (LTF) site). The LTF is approximately 6.5 road miles south of the project area. The Otter Lake Project Area lies within Value Comparison Unit (VCU) 2010. The project area is administered by the Hoonah Ranger District, Tongass National Forest.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose and need for the project is to implement the direction, goals, and objectives in the modified 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (TLMPR), dated May 23, 1997 and the Record of Decision, dated April 13, 1999. The project is planned to move timber stands to a managed condition resulting in a healthier, faster growing stand, to increase growth and yield from the managed stands, to reduce volume loss associated with disease and decay and to recover timber volume that might otherwise be lost for human use.

The project is planned to contribute an estimated 12 million board feet of sawlog and utility timber in support of the Tongass National Forest timber program, in order to meet the direction, in the Tongass Timber Reform Act, section 101, to ''seek to provide a supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest which (1) meets the annual market demand for timber from such forest and (2) meet market demand from such forest for each planning cycle'' to the extent consistent with multiple use and sustained yield from

all renewable forest resources. This environmental impact statement may result in one or more timber sales under the sale program.

Decisions To Be Made

Fred S. Salinas, Assistant Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest, is the Responsible Official and will decide whether or not to authorize timber harvest within the Otter Lake Project Area. He will decide: (1) If the design of the timber sale offerings are consistent with meeting resource protection standards and guidelines in the Modified 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan; (2) how much timber volume to make available and what the logical sale offerings are; (3) the location and design of the arterial and collector road system needed to develop the project area, and the post-sale transportation options; (4) the location and design of timber harvest units (including silvicultural prescriptions and logging systems), and log transfer and camp facilities; (5) mitigation and monitoring measures for sound resource management; and (6) subsistence determinations required by Secton 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Management Objectives

The project area is in Value Comparison Unit (VCU) 2010, and is located totally within the Timber Production Land Use Designation (LUD). An Old-growth Habitat Reserve is located immedately adjacent to the south and east of the project boundary. The existing Eight Fathom Bight Log Transfer Facility (LTF), located approximately five air miles to the south, lies within a Scenic Viewshed LUD.

Management direction that the proposed action is designed to address include: Desired Condition—Suitable timber lands are managed for the production of sawtimber and other products on an even-flow, long-term sustained yield basis. A road system provides access for timber management activities, recreation, hunting and fishing, and other administration uses; some roads may be closed seasonally or permanently to address resource concerns. Management activities will generally dominate the landscape. Tree stands are healthy and in a balanced mix of age classes from young stands to trees of harvestable age, often in 40- to 100-acres stands. Recreation opportunities associated with roaded settings are available. A variety of wildlife habitats, predominately in the early to middle successional stages, are present.

Goals—Manage the timber resource for production of saw timber and other wood products from suitable timber lands made available for timber harvest, on an even-flow, long-term sustained yield basis, and in an economically efficient manner. Provide a diversity of opportunities for resource uses that contribute to the local and regional economies of Southeast Alaska.

Objectives—Seek to provide a timber supply sufficient to meet the annual market demand for Tongass National Forest timber, and the market demand for the planning cycle. Support a wide range of natural resource employment opportunities within Southeast Alaska's communities.

Tentative Issues

Scoping has not yet been done for this project; however, issues identified for the Supplement to the Environmental Impact Statement, 1981–86 & 1986–90 Operating Periods (SEIS) and the Eight Fathom Timber Sale(s) Project for the same general area are considered to still be applicable. The issues as expressed below have been modified to reflect the reduced project area.

Issue 1—Project Effects on Recreation and Tourism: This issue focuses on how timber harvest and road building would affect recreational opportunities and the visual character of the landscape. This includes potential disruptions to fish and wildlife resources that drive recreation/tourism businesses, extent of additional access for recreational users via logging roads, and if there would be impacts on areas of concern such as Neka Bay.

Issue 2—Subsistence Impacts: This issue focuses on whether or not proposed activities will significantly restrict subsistence use through effects on wildlife, fish, and plant resources for customary and traditional uses. Concerns include whether harvest activities would displace subsistence users, whether additional use from logging personnel, increased traffic from logging, and increased future recreation use on new logging roads would displace or reduce abundance of subsistence resources, including deer.

Issue 3—Potential Economic Impacts: The issue focuses on the capability of the project area to provide a long-term sustained yield of timber and other resources, and whether this associated level of outputs is sufficient to meet the needs of dependent local communities. These concerns include whether timber production and productivity can be maximized to achieve positive economic return, whether the short-term timber obligations will be balanced with long-term maintenance of other natural resources, whether the economic analysis would consider the economics of resources other than timber, and whether the road system for the project would remain in place to facilitate future harvest and minerals activities.

Issue 4—Protection of Fish and Wildlife Resources: This issue focuses on the effects of timber harvest and associated road construction on water quality, fish, and wildlife, including protection of fish and wildlife habitat during harvest activities, whether biodiversity and population viability will be affected, whether sediments from roads and logging will affect salmon production downstream, and extent of effects on deer, marten, and bear habitats.

Issue 5—Cultural and Historical Resource Protection: This issue focuses on the protection of heritage resources, and concerns a project design to avoid damage to cultural or historical resources, and coordination with the State's Scenic Byway Program to address proposed projects within areas designated for corridors of scenic, historic, cultural, recreational, or archaeological significance.

Issue 6—Protection of Caves and Karst Features: This issue focuses on the potential presence of karst features in the project locale.

Issue 7—Alternatives to Clearcutting: The issue is focused on public concerns that silvicultural systems other than even-aged management be considered in the alternatives, and implementation of a reforestation program to speed recovery after harvest and to reduce the duration of scenic effects, and the presence of clearcuts in high public use, highly visible areas.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is the harvesting of seven units of a 14-unit pool totalling 849 acres with 19.4 million board feet. The total area harvested, including road right-of-way, is 595 acres yielding an estimated 12.4 million board feet. Logging systems include three helicopter units totalling 240 acres for 5.6 million board feet, as well as four units with a ground-based logging system (skyline or shovel) with 326 acres yielding 6.2 million board feet. All units are planned as clearcuts. The proposed road system consists of 3.2 miles of new specified road construction, 0.5 miles of temporary road construction, and 2.5 miles of reconstruction of existing specified road. Road construction right-of-way area is 22 acres, yielding 0.6 million board feet. Nineteen percent of the 3,170

acres of timber suitable and available for harvest would be harvested under this scenario. All units and roads will conform to the standards and guidelines in the TLMPR, including stream buffers, retention of green trees within units, marten habitat requirements, and the avoidance of extreme hazard soils and over-steepened slopes.

Permits

To proceed with the timber harvest as proposed, various permits must be obtained from other agencies. Federal agencies and their responsibilities are as follows: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has the responsibility for approval of discharge of dredged or fill material into the waters of the United States (section 404 of the Clean Water Act), and approval of construction of structures or work in navigable waters of the United States (section of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899); the Environmental Protection Agency has responsibility for the National Pollution Discharge System review (section 402 of the Clean Water Act); the U.S. Coast Guard has responsibility for Coast Guard Bridge Permits (General Bridge Act of 1946) required for all structures constructed within the tidal influence zone. Other agencies which will participate are as follows: State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources has responsibility for authorization for occupancy and use of tidelands and submerged lands; State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation has responsibility for the Solid Waste Disposal Permit (section 402 of the Clean Water Act, 18 AAC 60.230) and the Certificate of Reasonable Assurance (section 401 of the Clean Water Act). Both the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be invited to participate as cooperating agencies in the preparation of the environmental impact statement.

Process Steps

Preparation of the environmental impact statement will include the following steps: (1) Public notification and scoping (comments due in approximately 45 days, beginning with the publication of this Notice in the **Federal Register**; (2) identification of significant issues related to the proposed action to be analyzed in depth; (3) development of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed action which meet the stated purpose and need for the proposed action and address significant issues; and (4) identification of the potential environmental effects of the alternatives.

Scoping announcements will be published during the week of July 12, 1999 in the *Juneau Empire* and *Daily Sitka Sentinel*, and copies of the announcement will be mailed to interested persons. This announcement will describe the timing and location of public involvement meetings. Scoping meetings will be held in Hoonah in August 1999. Comments received from public scoping will be analyzed to determine significant issues within the scope of this project. Alternatives to the proposed action will be developed to address significant issues. One of these will be the ''No Action'' alternative in which there will be no project-related activities such as timber harvest or road construction. Other alternatives may consider various levels and locations of activities in response to issues and other resource objectives. The direct and indirect effects of each alternative will be analyzed and documented. Mitigating measures will be identified and their effectiveness evaluated.

Public Participation Encouraged

In addition to commenting on the proposed action and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement when it is released, agencies and other interested persons or groups are invited to contact Forest Service Officials at any time during the planning process.

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in September 2000. The comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be 45 days 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 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 that are not raised until after completion of the Final Environmental Statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts; *City of Angoon* v. *Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Circuit, 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc.* v. *Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334 (E.D. Wis 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is 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 to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider 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 Environmental Statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the Draft Environmental Statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the document. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, 40 CFR 1503.3, in addressing these points.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision is expected to be released in June 2001. The Assistant Forest Supervisor, Sitka Assistant Forest Supervisor's Office, Tongass National Forest, will, as the responsible official for the environmental impact statement, make a decision regarding this proposal considering the comments, responses, environmental consequences disclosed in the final environmental impact statement, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The decision and supporting reasons will be documented in the record of decision.

Fred S. Salinas,

Assistant Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 99–18068 Filed 7–14–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Agenda and Notice of Public Meeting of the Iowa Advisory Committee

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, that a meeting of the Iowa Advisory Committee to the Commission will convene at 6 p.m. and adjourn at 8 p.m. on August 2, 1999, at the Marriott Hotel, 700 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50309. The purpose of the meeting is to plan future activities.

Persons desiring additional information, or planning a presentation to the Committee, should contact Melvin L. Jenkins, Director of the Central Regional Office, 913–551–1400 (TDD 913–551–1414). Hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign