

public inspection at the above address during regular business hours (8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.).

The current US grade Standards for feeder cattle, along with the proposed changes, are available either through the above addresses or by accessing AMS's Home Page on the Internet at www.ams.usda.gov/standards/stanls.htm.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Herbert C. Abraham, Chief, on (202) 720-4486.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 203(c) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, directs and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture "to develop and improve standards of quality, condition, quantity, grade, and packaging and recommend and demonstrate such standards in order to encourage uniformity and consistency in commercial practices * * *" AMS is committed to carrying out this authority in a manner that facilitates the marketing of agricultural commodities and makes copies of official standards available upon request. The United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle do not appear in the Code of Federal Regulations but are maintained by USDA.

AMS is proposing to change the United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle using the procedures it published in the August 13, 1997, **Federal Register** and that appear in part 36 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR part 36).

The current United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle were adopted September 2, 1979. These grade standards were originally used more extensively in the Eastern United States where marketing feeder cattle by commingling ownership and packaging

by grade and weight is popular due to the small average cow herd size. Nevertheless, the feeder cattle standards have become the descriptive standards of choice by most of the feeder cattle industry nationwide. More importantly, these standards have served to educate the industry about the importance of frame size in feeder cattle and how frame size relates to an animal's predetermined, market ready weight. Additionally, the standards have emphasized the importance of muscle thickness as it relates to the beef cattle industry.

Significant changes (genetic and management) have taken place in the feeder cattle segment of the beef industry since the current grade standards were adopted. The industry has moved from essentially four basic breeds in the 1950's to nearly 100 in the 1990's, resulting in a dramatic effect on the basic genetics of the beef cattle population. Consequently, feeder cattle type—as it relates to mature size—has also changed dramatically. This, linked with changes that have occurred during the same time period in feeder cattle management practices, has caused a growing concern by USDA that the current feeder cattle standards have become outdated since their adoption 20 years ago.

The feeder cattle grades are based on differences in frame size and muscle thickness—two of the most important genetic factors affecting merit (value) in feeder cattle. Frame size refers to the animal's skeletal size—its height and body length—in relation to its age. Frame size relates to the weight at which, under normal feeding and management practices, an animal will produce a carcass of a given grade. Large framed animals require a longer time in

the feedlot to reach a given grade and will weigh more than a small framed animal would weigh at the same grade. Muscle thickness is related to muscle-to-bone ratio at a given degree of fatness and hence to carcass yield grade. Thicker muscled animals produce a higher percentage yield of lean meat. The current grades recognize three frame size grades and three muscle thickness grades. The three frame sizes are Small Frame, Medium Frame and Large Frame. The three muscle thickness grades from the thickest to the thinnest are No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3.

USDA entered into a project with Colorado State University funded by the USDA, AMS, Federal/State Market Improvement Program to determine: (1) The live weights at which the current population of Large, Medium, and Small framed feeder steers and heifers attain a degree of finish associated with a carcass quality grade of low Choice, and; (2) an effective approach for stratification of feeder cattle into muscle thickness categories that reflect eventual differences in carcass muscularity and ultimate USDA Yield Grade. Results of this project indicated that the current standards could be improved by increasing the minimum weights specified for frame size grades to more accurately reflect today's beef cattle population. Also, the project indicated that the proposed adjustments in the muscling grades may distribute feeder cattle numbers more evenly among the No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 grades and would more effectively identify carcass USDA Yield Grade differences among feeder cattle.

Based on these findings, and the feeder cattle industries' request, AMS proposes the frame size parameters be changed:

| | Small frame | Medium frame | Large frame |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Steers: | | | |
| From (current) | <1000 # | 1000-1200 # | >1200 # |
| To (proposed) | <1100 # | 1100-1250 # | >1250 # |
| Heifers: | | | |
| From (current) | <850 # | 850-1000 # | >1000 # |
| To (proposed) | <1000 # | 1000-1150 # | >1150 # |

The Department also proposes to change the muscle grades:
 Upper 2/3 of current #1 muscling grade = proposed #1
 Upper 1/3 of current #2 and lower 1/3 of current # 1 = proposed #2
 Lower 2/3 of current #2 = proposed #3
 Less than current requirements for #2 = proposed #4

AMS is publishing this notice with a 60-day comment period which will

provide a sufficient amount of time for interested persons to comment on the proposed revision to the standards.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1621-1627.

Dated: September 17, 1999.

Barry L. Carpenter,

Deputy Administrator, Livestock and Seed Program.

[FR Doc. 99-24771 Filed 9-22-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Information Collection; Request for Comments; Advertised Timber for Sale

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the

Forest Service announces its intention to reinstate the form, FS-2400-14-Bid For Advertised Timber, and to combine it with the form, FS-2400-42a National Forest Timber For Sale (Advertisement and Short-Form Bid). FS-2400-14 is currently approved under Office of Management and Budget (OMB) authorization number 0596-0114. It is our intention to combine FS-2400-14 and FS-2400-42a under OMB authorization number 0596-0066. The burden associated with FS-2400-14 will be removed from 0596-0114 and placed under 0596-0066.

The agency uses the collected information to ensure that National Forest System timber is sold at not less than appraised value, that bidders meet specific criteria when submitting a bid, and that anti-trust violations do not occur during the bidding process.

DATES: Comments must be received in writing on or before November 22, 1999.

ADDRESSES: All comments should be addressed to: Director, Forest Management Staff, Mail Stop 1105, Forest Service, USDA, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090.

Comments also may be submitted via facimile to (202) 205-1045 or by email to: fm/wo@fs.fed.us.

The public may inspect comments received at the Office of the Director of Forest Management, 201 14th Street, SW, Washington, DC. Callers are urged to call ahead to facilitate entrance into the building.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Naylor, Forest Management Staff, at (202) 205-0858.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Pursuant to statutory requirements at 16 U.S.C. 472a, the Secretary of Agriculture must advertise sales of all National Forest System timber or forest products exceeding \$10,000 in appraised value, unless (1) extraordinary conditions exist as defined by regulation; (2) select bidding methods ensure open and fair competition; (3) select bidding methods ensure that the Federal Government receives not less than appraised value of the timber or forest product; and (4) bidding patterns are monitored for evidence of unlawful bidding practices.

Pursuant to the Forest Service Small Business Timber Sale Set-Aside Program, developed in cooperation with the Small Business Administration, Forest Service regulations at § 223.84 of Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations require that the Forest Service bid form used by potential timber sale bidders include provisions

for small concerns, such as (1) electing road construction by the Forest Service; (2) certifying as to their small business status; and (3) being informed of other road construction requirements in the bid and/or contract.

Respondents are bidders on National Forest System timber sales. Forest Service sale officers mail bid forms to potential bidders, and bidders return the completed forms, dated and signed, to the Forest Service sale officer. The data collected are used by the agency to ensure that National Forest System timber is sold at not less than appraised value, that bidders meet specific criteria when submitting a bid, and that anti-trust violations do not occur during the bidding process.

FS-2400-14-Bid for Advertised Timber (currently OMB No. 0596-0114) and FS-2400-42a—National Forest Timber Sale (OMB No. 0596-0066) implement the same statutes, policies, and regulations and collect similar information from the same applicant. Therefore, the Forest Service intends to reinstate and combine FS-2400-14 with FS-2400-42a and extend FS-2400-42a under 0596-0066, which expires February 28, 2000.

Data gathered in these information collections are not available from other sources.

Description of Information Collection

The following describes the information collection to be extended.

Title: FS-2400-42a—National Forest Timber For Sale (Advertisement and Short-Form Bid).

OMB Number: 0596-0066.

Expiration Date of Approval: February 28, 2000.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The data collected are used by the agency to ensure that National Forest System timber is sold at not less than appraised value, that bidders meet specific criteria when submitting a bid, and that anti-trust violations do not occur during the bidding process.

Form FS-2400-42a—National Forest Timber For Sale is used to solicit and receive bids on short-notice advertised timber sales of less than 30 days and less than \$10,000 in advertised value.

Respondents are bidders on National Forest System timber sales. Forest Service sale officers mail bid forms to potential bidders, and bidders return the completed forms, dated and signed, to the Forest Service sale officer.

Before submitting a bid, the bidder usually, but is not required to, inspect the sale area, review the requirements of the sample contract, and take other

steps as may be reasonably necessary to ascertain the location, estimated volumes, and operating costs of the offered timber or forest product. Each bidder must include the following information: the price bid for the timber; the bidder's name, address, and signature; the bidder's tax identification number; certification that the bidder is not debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or voluntarily excluded from bidding on Government contracts; and that the bidder has not defaulted on any contracts within the last 3 years.

The tax identification number of each bidder is entered into an automated bid monitoring system, which is used to determine if speculative bidding or unlawful bidding practices are occurring. The tax identification number also is used to facilitate electronic payments to the purchaser.

Data gathered in this information collection are not available from other sources.

Estimate of Burden: 130 minutes.

Type of Respondents: Individuals, large and small businesses, and corporations bidding on National Forest timber sales.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 5,000.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 3.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 32,500 hours.

Description of Information Collection

The following describes the information collection to be reinstated but combined with FS-2400-42a—National Forest Timber For Sale under OMB authorization number 0596-0066:

Title: FS-2400-14-Bid For Advertised Timber.

OMB Number: 0596-0114.

Expiration Date of Approval: May 31, 1999.

Type of Request: Reinstatement of a previously approved information collection to be combined with FS-2400-42a—National Forest Timber for Sale under 0596-0066.

Abstract: The data collected will be used by the agency to ensure that National Forest System timber will be sold at not less than appraised value, that bidders will meet specific criteria when submitting a bid, and that anti-trust violations will not occur during the bidding process. This form will be used for soliciting and receiving bids on advertised sales that are 30 days or longer and on sales greater than \$10,000 in advertised value.

Respondents will be bidders on National Forest System timber sales. Forest Service sale officers will mail bid forms to potential bidders, and bidders

will return the completed forms, dated and signed, to the Forest Service sale officer. Before submitting the bid, the bidder usually will inspect the sale area, review the requirements of the sample contract, and take other steps as may be reasonably necessary to ascertain the location, estimated volumes, and operating costs of the offered timber or forest product.

Each bidder will have to include the following information: the price bid for the timber; the bidder's name, address, and signature; the bidder's tax identification number; the amount and type of the bid guarantee; certification that the bidder has not paid a contingent fee to someone to obtain the contract for him or her, or retained any person or company to secure the contract; certification that the bidder will meet the responsibility requirements at Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), § 223.101; certification that the bidder will complete the consideration requirements of the contract; certification that the bidder has not been debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or voluntarily excluded from conducting business with the government; certification that the bidder has not been indicted or has not had a criminal or civil conviction within a 3-year period; certification that the bidder has not defaulted on a public contract or agreement in the last 3 years; information on whether the bidder has participated in a previous contract covered by section 202 of Executive Order 11246, Non-discrimination in Employment; certification that the bidder has independently determined the bid price; selection of the road construction option; certification of a firm offer; certification that the bidder has expressly adopted the terms of the bid and sample contract; certification that the bidder has inspected the sale area and certifies that he or she understands that the Forest Service does not guarantee the amount or quality of the timber or forest product; certification that the bidder will comply with the Forest Resources Conservation and Shortage Relief Act of 1990 as required by 36 CFR § 223.87; certification that the bidder has not been or will not be affiliated with the original purchaser of a contract on a timber sale that is being re-offered, when the original contract was terminated for breach or failure to cut; and the bidder will have to list affiliates that control or have the power to control the bidder's company.

The tax identification number of each bidder will be entered into a computerized bid monitoring system. This system will be used to determine

if speculative bidding or if unlawful bidding practices are occurring. The tax identification number also will be used to facilitate electronic payments to the purchaser.

Data gathered in this information collection are not available from other sources.

Estimate of Burden: 370 minutes.

Type of Respondents: Individuals, large and small businesses, and corporations bidding on National Forest timber sales.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 500.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 2.0.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 6,167 hours.

Comment is Invited

The agency invites comments on the following: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes or the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical or scientific utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Use of Comments

All comments received in response to this notice, including name and address when provided, will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval. All comments also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: September 16, 1999.

Paul Brouha,

Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System.

[FR Doc. 99-24827 Filed 9-22-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Revised Land and Resource Management Plan; San Juan National Forest, Colorado

AGENCY: USDA Forest Service.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement in conjunction with revision of the land and resource management plan for the San Juan National Forest, located in Archuleta, Conejos, Dolores, Hinsdale, La Plata, Mineral, Montezuma, Rio Grande, and San Juan Counties, Colorado.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement in conjunction with the revision of its Land and Resource Management Plan (hereafter referred to as Forest Plan or Plan) for the San Juan National Forest.

This notice describes the specific portions of the current Forest Plan to be revised, environmental issues considered in the revision, estimated dates for filing the environmental impact statement, information concerning public and tribal participation, and the names and addresses of the agency officials who can provide additional information.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by January 31, 2000. The agency expects to file a draft environmental impact statement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and make it available for public, agency, and tribal government comment in the spring of 2001. A final environmental impact statement is expected to be filed in the fall of 2002.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: Thurman Wilson, Team Leader, Forest Plan Revision Team, San Juan National Forest, 15 Burnett Court, Durango, CO 81301.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thurman Wilson, Planning Team Leader, (970) 385-1246.

Responsible Official: Lyle Laverty, Rocky Mountain Regional Forester at P.O. Box 25127, Lakewood, CO 80225-0127.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to Part 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219.10(g), the Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region gives notice of the agency's intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the revision effort described above. According to 36 CFR 219.10(g), land and resource management plans are ordinarily revised on a 10- to 15-year cycle. The existing Forest Plan was approved on September 29, 1983, with a significant amendment on May 15, 1992.

The Regional Forester gives notice that the Forest is beginning an environmental-analysis and decision-making process for this proposed action