Modernized Poultry Inspection Program (MPIP) for chicken, turkey, and fowl slaughter inspection in Canadian establishments that process poultry, including those that export to the United States and to other countries.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before January 28, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the MPIP document are available from the FSIS Docket Clerk, Room 102 Cotton Annex, 300 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250–3700. A copy may also be obtained from the CFIA homepage at *http://www.cfia-acia.agr.ca/english/animal/meat/mmop/*mpip/mpiptoc—e.html. Submit one original and two copies of written comments to the FSIS Docket Clerk, Docket #99–048N, at the address shown above. Facsimile comments may be sent to 202–205–0381. The public can review all received comments in the FSIS Docket Room from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information about the MPIP document, contact Mr. Clark Danford, Acting Director, International Policy Division; Office of Policy, Program Development, and Evaluation; (202) 720–6400; or by electronic mail to *clark.danford@usda.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

In August 1999, CFIA submitted its proposal for a new slaughter inspection system described as the ''Modernized Poultry Inspection Program.'' Copies are available as described in the **ADDRESSES** section above. MPIP would be used in Canadian establishments that slaughter chicken, turkey, and fowl. CFIA describes MPIP as follows: ''National and international poultry inspection systems are constantly evolving. Canada and its poultry inspection programs are no exceptions. MPIP represents the latest Canadian advance in poultry inspection methodology. The CFIA is now making MPIP methodology available to federally registered poultry slaughter establishments across Canada. MPIP is a HACCP and science-based inspection system. It enhances the safety and wholesomeness of Canadian poultry products, and as a result, contributes to the viability of the Canadian poultry industry. MPIP focuses on the slaughter process within the gate to plate food safety continuum.''

The CFIA has set specific objectives for its MPIP program. These objectives include the following:

''(a) Control of hazards associated with the contamination of live poultry with foodborne pathogens as received at registered establishments, and the subsequent spread of these pathogenic bacteria during the slaughter and processing of poultry;

(b) Promote the proactive control (prevent, eliminate or reduce) of hazards through the implementation of a CFIA-recognized HACCP system in poultry slaughtering establishments;

(c) Facilitate the change from prescriptive regulatory requirements to strictly enforced objective performance standards in poultry inspection;

(d) Facilitate the transition of CFIA staff from hands-on inspection to audit-based verification activities for poultry slaughter establishments operating under a HACCP system;

(e) Facilitate the assumption by industry of the detection and handling of all carcasses with defects (previously performed by CFIA inspectors) under continuous government oversight; and

(f) Respond to changing international trade requirements, e.g., Pathogen Reduction and HACCP Program Rule in the US.''

Determination of Equivalence

As a result of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (commonly referred to as the ''SPS Agreement''), contracting parties, including the United States, are committed to harmonizing their human, animal, and plant health import requirements by basing their sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) import requirements on ''equivalent'' sanitary measures or standards. Among other things, the SPS Agreement obliges the United States to respond to requests by other contracting parties to establish the equivalence of specified poultry and poultry processing measures with those of the United States. The Canadian Government has formally requested that the United States consider its MPIP proposal to pilot-test a revised slaughter inspection system. A determination of equivalence will be necessary before any Canadian MPIP establishment may export its poultry to the United States.

FSIS will evaluate the MPIP documentation using two criteria for equivalence:

(1) Does the MPIP meet all USDA requirements for the import of poultry products to the United States?

(2) Does the MPIP afford American consumers the *same* level of public health protection provided by USDA domestic poultry slaughter inspection?

However, before making any equivalence decisions or taking any action on the MPIP document, FSIS is requesting public comment on the Canadian proposal.

Additional Public Notification

FSIS has considered, under Department Regulation 4300–4, ''Civil Rights Impact Analysis,'' dated September 1993, the potential civil rights impact of this notice on minorities, women, and persons with disabilities. FSIS anticipates that this notice will not have a negative or disproportionate impact on minorities, women, and persons with disabilities. Notices generally are designed to provide information and public awareness of important policy developments. Consequently, in an effort to better ensure that minorities, women, and persons with disabilities are aware of this notice, FSIS will announce the publication of this **Federal Register** notice in the *FSIS Constituent Update*.

FSIS provides a weekly *FSIS Constituent Update*, which is communicated via fax to over 300 organizations and individuals. In addition, the update is available on line through the FSIS web page located at *http://www.fsis.usda.gov*. The update is used to provide information regarding FSIS policies, procedures, regulations, **Federal Register** notices, FSIS public meetings, recalls, and any other types of information that could affect or would be of interest to our constituents. This constituent fax list consists of industry, trade, and farm groups, consumer interest groups, allied health professionals, scientific professionals, and other individuals that have requested to be included. Through these various channels, FSIS is able to provide information to a much broader, more diverse audience than would otherwise be possible. For more information or to be added to the constituent fax list, fax your request to the Agency's Congressional and Public Affairs Office, at (202) 720–5704.

Done at Washington, DC on November 19, 1999.

Thomas J. Billy,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 99–30908 Filed 11–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–DM–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Lost Moose Ecosystem Management Project, Bitterroot National Forest, Ravalli County, MT

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental effects of management activities proposed in the Lost Moose Ecosystem Management Project area on the Darby Ranger District on the Bitterroot National Forest. Proposed management activities include: harvesting timber, management ignited prescribed burning, restoring ponderosa pine and aspen; precommercial thinning; fire hazard reduction treatments; and implementing road-use restrictions and watershed and recreation improvements. The Lost Moose Project Area is located in Ravalli County, Montana, approximately five miles west of the city of Hamilton and includes Lost Horse, Canyon, and Roaring Lion Creeks.

A variety of management activities proposed in the project are being considered together because they represent either connected or cumulative actions as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.25). The purposes of the project are to reduce the fuels hazard, restore site productivity, and return ecosystems to more sustainable conditions. This project level analysis will tier to the Bitterroot National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and Final EIS (September, 1987), which provides overall guidance for all land management activities in the Bitterroot National Forest.

DATE: Written comments and suggestions should be received by January 3, 2000.

ADDRESSES: The Responsible Official is Craig Bobzien, District Ranger, Darby Ranger District, Bitterroot National Forest, PO Box 388, Darby, Montana 59829. Written comments and suggestions concerning the scope of this analysis or a request to be included on the project mailing list should be sent to him at that address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tami Brewer, Resource Team Leader, Stevensville Ranger District, 88 Main Street, Stevensville, Montana, 59870, phone (406) 777–5461.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The project area encompasses approximately 50,715 acres of land in southwestern Montana on the Bitterroot National Forest. The Lost Moose area contains lands drained by Lost Horse Creek and several other Bitterroot River tributaries including Canyon, Sawtooth, and Roaring Lion Creeks. A map and legal descriptions are available on request.

Proposals in this analysis fall into three categories: Maintaining or restoring terrestrial ecosystems; maintaining or restoring aquatic ecosystems; and managing recreation. Proposals to maintain or restore terrestrial ecosystems include: underburning on about 1, 395 acres; restoring ponderosa pine ecosystems by reducing ladder fuels and underburning on about 307 acres; reducing fire risk along the Forest/residential interface by thinning and/or underburning or burning with shelterwood harvesting, and precommercial thinning on a total of about 2,050 acres; restoring hardwood tree and shrub communities by felling conifers and/or underburning to stimulate aspen reproduction on 260 acres; and creating and maintaining wildlife trees where opportunities exist. These actions are designed to: reduce the fuels hazard—particularly along the wildland/urban interface—and restore fire as a key ecosystem process; maintain and restore vegetative structures and compositions that reflect sustainable, natural patterns and processes; maintain and restore ecosystem health and productivity; enhance wildlife habitat; and provide wood products. Additionally, specific road-use restrictions are proposed to reduce human disturbance of wildlife and comply with Forest Plan standards for elk habitat effectiveness.

Proposals to maintain or restore aquatic ecosystems include: gravelling and/or installing waterbars or drainage dips on specified road segments; road obliteration; constructing a short road segment (about 0.25 mile) to allow access through an existing loop route; and improving drainage on FS Trail #128. Fish habitat improvements include adding large woody debris to specified stream segments, planting conifers, replacing/modifying culverts, and constructing resting pools. These actions would improve stream habitat, contribute to the long-term health of aquatic ecosystems, and improve water quality.

Proposals to manage recreation include: installing interpretative signs; extending the Blodgett Overlook Trail into a loop trail; improving resource conditions on the Foss-McCrossin/Brown irrigation ditch; and improving the Lost Horse dispersed camping sites. These actions would provide a balance of recreation opportunities while managing and enhancing other resource values.

Maps and data describing these proposals in greater detail are available on request.

The Bitterroot Forest Plan provides guidance for management activities through its goals, objectives, standards, and management area direction. The areas of proposed timber harvest occur in Management Areas 2, 3a, 3c, and 5. Aspen restoration is proposed in Management Areas 3a, 3b, and 3c. Prescribed underburning is proposed on lands within Forest Plan Management Areas 3c, 5, and 5–9. The management direction for these areas is briefly described as follows. Management Area 2 emphasizes elk winter range habitat, allows for timber management, and providing roaded dispersed recreation opportunities. Management Area 3a emphasizes visual quality, allows for timber management, and providing roaded dispersed recreation opportunities. Management Area 3b emphasizes protecting riparian habitat and water quality and providing for water-related recreation. Management Area 3c emphasizes visual quality, allows for timber management, and providing dispersed recreation opportunities. Management Area 5 emphasizes semi-primitive recreation and elk security. Management Area 5–9 emphasizes semi-primitive recreation and elk security and also includes proposed research natural areas. Portions of the Selway-Bitterroot Inventoried Roadless Area lie within the analysis area where management activities are proposed. Additionally, areas of unsuitable lands lie within some harvest units.

The analysis process for the Lost Moose Ecosystem Management Project began in 1996. In April 1997 a summary of the existing conditions, purpose and need for action, and management opportunities for the assessment area was mailed. Following several public meetings, a Proposed Action was developed and mailed in March 1999. Primary issues that were identified at that time include the following: 1. How would the proposed timber harvest and prescribed burning affect the undeveloped character of this portion of the Selway-Bitterroot Inventoried Roadless Area? 2. How would the proposed activities affect fish and wildlife species that inhabit the area? 3. Can the vegetation diversity and ecological purposes of the project be met without any further timber extraction or road building in the area? 4. Are the proposed road closures necessary to improve elk habitat? 5. Would the proposed road closures cause more off-road traffic and subsequent resource damage? Other issues commonly associated with prescribed fire and timber harvest include: potential effects on water and air quality, soils, old growth, and scenery

values. This list may be verified, expanded, or modified based on public scoping for this proposal.

The Forest Service will consider a range of alternatives in the EIS. One of these will be the ''no action'' alternative, in which none of the proposed activities would be implemented. Additional alternatives will examine varying levels and locations for the proposed activities to achieve the proposal's purposes as well as to respond to the issues and other resource values. The EIS will analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of the alternatives. Known past, present, and scheduled activities on both private and national forest lands will be considered.

In addition to the scoping that has already occurred for this project, the public is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from federal, state, and local agencies and other organizations and individuals who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. No further public meetings are scheduled at this time.

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and available for public review in September 2000. At that time, the EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the **Federal Register.** The Comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date that the EPA's notice of availability appears in the **Federal Register.** It is very important that those interested in the management of the Lost Moose area participate at that time. To be most helpful, comments on the Draft EIS should be as specific as possible. The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed in January 2001.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice at this early stage of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of Draft EISs 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 EIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the Final EIS may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon* v. *Hodel,* 803 F2d 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 scoping 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 developing issues and alternatives.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues related to 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 for this EIS is Craig Bobzien, District Ranger, Darby Ranger District, Bitterroot National Forest, P.O. Box 388. Darby, Montana 59829. The decision to be made is what, if anything, should be done in the Lost Moose Project Area to: (1) Reduce the fuels hazard; (2) restore site productivity and return ecosystems to a more sustainable condition; (3) restore watersheds; (4) promote aspen reproduction to restore hardwood tree and shrub communities; and (5) provide goods and services such as wood products and recreation opportunities. He will document the decision and reasons for the decision in a Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations.

Dated: November 16, 1999.

Susan L. Heald,

Acting Forest Supervisor, Bitterroot National Forest.

[FR Doc. 99–30826 Filed 11–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Lakeface-Lamb Fuel Reduction, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Bonner County, Idaho

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 disclose the potential environmental effects of reducing the wildfire risk and treating stands with insect and disease problems in the Lakeface-Lamb project area on the Priest Lake Range District, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Bonner County, Idaho.

The proposed action includes unit-specific fuel and silvicultural treatments as well as reforestation needs, harvest techniques, and other site-specific connected actions. The proposed action is divided into several themes based on treatment needs responding to the purpose and need.

These management activities will be administered by the Priest Lake Ranger District of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests in Bonner County, Idaho. This EIS will tier to the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Forest Plan (September 1987).

DATES: Comments should be postmarked on or before December 29, 1999. Please include your name and address and the name of the project you are commenting on.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments and suggestions on the proposed management activities or request to be placed on the project mailing list to Kent Dunstan, Priest Lake Ranger District, 32203 Highway 57, Priest River, Idaho 83856.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Asleson, Project Team Leader, Priest Lake Ranger District, 32202 Highway 57, Priest River, ID 83856.

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; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Parts 215 or 217. 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 Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such 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 within 10 days.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The public has raised concern about the threat of fires escaping from National Forest lands and endangering private land values. On a landscape level, the threat of severe lethal fires as defined in the Interior Columbia Basin Science Assessment has increased by nearly 20 percent, including the moist forest types found in the project area. The buildup of natural fuels is outside acceptable levels and the frequency and