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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

Higher Education Challenge Grants Program for Fiscal Year 2000; Request for Proposals and Request for Input; Correction Notice

AGENCY: Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA.

ACTION: Correction to notice of request for proposals and request for input.

SUMMARY: In notice document published in the issue of Friday, December 17, 1999, (64 FR 242) the date to receive hand delivered proposals is erroneous. The due date for Form CSREES-711, "Intent to Submit a Proposal," also is erroneous. This notice corrects the date to receive hand delivered proposals and the due date for Form CSREES-711, "Intent to Submit a Proposal," as follows:

On page 70687, in the third column, third paragraph, first sentence of the USDA notice, the date to receive hand delivered proposals was erroneous. The correction is February 14, 2000.

On page 70687, in the third column, fifth paragraph, first sentence of the USDA notice, the date to receive Form CSREES-771, "Intent to Submit a Proposal," is erroneous. The correction is January 17, 2000.

Done at Washington, D.C., this 22 day of December 1999.

Charles W. Laughlin,

Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

[FR Doc. 99-33994 Filed 12-29-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Steamboat Resource Area, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Shoshone County, Idaho

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice, intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The project area is approximately 27,000 acres in size, and is located in the Steamboat Creek basin (T50N, R2E, Sec. 1-6, 8-15; T50N, R3E, Sec. 5-8, 18; T51N, R1E, Sec. 24-26, 35-36; T51N, R23, Sec. 9-11, 13-36; T51N, R3E, Sec. 30-32; Boise Meridian). The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze and disclose the environmental effects of the project.

The purpose of this proposal is twofold: over the short term, the goal is to reduce the negative effects specific roads are having on streams in the watershed. The long-term goal is to trend the watershed toward a condition of increased resilience to withstand future disturbances (such as wildfire, disease, or insect infestations) by improving the overall health and stability of both the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by January 31, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, 2502 East Sherman Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, 83814-5899.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sherri Lionberger, Project Team Leader, (208) 769-3065.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The resource area has been modified by the effects of past harvest, road building, and historic natural disturbances. White pine blister rust continues to cause mortality in the white pine, and the species composition is changing to a less resilient type of forest. Streamside roads that infringe on flood plains, large areas of regeneration harvests, outdated skidding practices, and natural flood events have combined to increase sediment and destabilize stream channels, causing a loss of fisheries habitat locally as well as further downstream. This history has led to vegetative and watershed conditions in

need of rehabilitation to trend the resource area toward more naturally-resilient characteristics. The proposal will include the following possible actions: (1) Improving aquatic resource conditions by reducing the amount of sediment entering the stream from existing roads through repair or removal of specific road segments and/or road channel crossings; and (2) Increasing the stocking and size of rust-resistant white pine and other long-lived seral conifers through regeneration and stand-tending activities such as timber harvest, prescribed fire, tree planting, pruning and thinning. The scope of this analysis is limited to activities related to the purpose and need, and measures necessary to mitigate the effects these activities may have on the environment. The decision will identify if, when, how and where to schedule activities to meet these goals.

Similar activities were examined in this area under the Boston Brook Resource Area Environmental Assessment, published in September 1997. No decisions were implemented based on that document. Since that time, there have been changes in both resource conditions and Forest Service policies, which warrant another look at this area. A new name is being used for the current proposal to make it easier for the public to recognize the area to be analyzed and to avoid confusion with the earlier analysis.

The issues raised and alternatives developed as a result of the public participation for the Boston Brook Environmental Assessment will be brought forward for the EIS. Modifications may be made based on updated resource information, changes in Forest Service policy, and/or additional public comments.

Key issues that will drive alternative development have been preliminarily identified based on past scoping activities and known resource concerns. To date, these key issues include protection or improvement of aquatic resources (water quality and fisheries habitat), and protection or improvement of forest vegetation (timber stands and rare plants). There are other issues which may not drive alternative development but which will be analyzed to disclose environmental effects. For example, protection of key big-game habitat, and ensuring access for recreation activities.

In addition to the "No Action" alternative, five action alternatives have been identified for consideration:

- An alternative that would include both road removal and timber harvest, utilizing small harvest openings that would not result in any increase in water yields.

- An alternative that would include both road removal and timber harvest, creating harvest openings of at least 5 acres in the rain-on-snow zones, to minimize increases in water yields while creating openings large enough to re-establish seral species such as white pine and western larch.

- An alternative that would include both road removal and timber harvest, simulating historical disturbance patterns which involve patches larger than 5 acres. These larger harvest units would be more economically efficient in terms of harvest and reforestation costs.

- An alternative designed to resemble a "pulse" event such as a large fire, by harvesting at least 1,000 acres in one general area, leaving islands or structure similar to the mosaic found after a fire. This approach would start the trend toward more resilient timber stands with longer-lived seral species, and would result in less fragmentation of stands than would harvest utilizing smaller openings in greater number.

- An alternative that would accomplish watershed rehabilitation work, without timber harvest activities.

Comments from the public and other agencies will be used in preparation of the draft EIS. The scoping process will be used to:

- (1) Identify additional potential issues;

- (2) Eliminate minor issues or those issues which have been covered by a relevant previous environmental analysis;

- (3) Identify additional alternatives to the proposed action;

- (4) Identify potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (*i.e.*, direct, indirect and cumulative effects).

While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 30 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the draft EIS, which is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency and available for public review in March 2000. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**. In addition, the public is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the

analysis and prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from federal, state, and local agencies, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and other individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action.

The USDA Forest Service is the lead agency for this proposal. District Ranger Susan Jeheber-Matthews is the responsible official.

The Forest Service believes it is important at this early stage 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.C. 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 impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *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.

Dated: December 15, 1999.

Susan Jeheber-Matthews,
District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 99-33984 Filed 12-29-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Oregon Coast Provincial Advisory Committee Meeting

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Oregon Coast Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) will meet on January 20, 2000, at the Hatfield Marine Science Center (Meeting Room #9), 2030 S. Marine Science Drive, Newport, Oregon. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. and continue until 4:00 p.m. Agenda items to be covered include: (1) Information sharing among PAC Members, (2) background will be provided on NW Forest Plan/aquatic strategies, and (3) will develop action plan for meetings in 2000. Two 15-minute open public forums are scheduled at 11:30 a.m. and 3:45 p.m. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend. The committee welcomes the public's written comments on committee business at any time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joni Quarnstrom, Public Affairs Specialist, Siuslaw National Forest (541-750-7075), or write to the Acting Forest Supervisor, Siuslaw National Forest, P.O. Box 1148, Corvallis, Oregon 97339.

Dated: December 21, 1999.

Jose L. Linares,

Acting Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 99-33985 Filed 12-29-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Departee Creek Watershed, Independence and Jackson Counties, Arkansas

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service.

ACTION: Notice of availability of record of decision.

SUMMARY: Kalven L. Trice, responsible Federal official for projects administered under the provisions of Public Law 83-566, 16 U.S.C. 1001-1008, in the State of Arkansas, is hereby providing notification that a Record of Decision to proceed with the installation of the Departee Creek Watershed project is available. Single copies of the Record of Decision may be obtained from Kalven L. Trice at the address shown.

For further information contact Kalven L. Trice, State Conservationist,