

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**.

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 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 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 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 concern on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It also helpful if comments refer to specific pages of 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. Reviews 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 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

Dated: March 6, 2000.

George Bain,

St. Joe District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 00-7017 Filed 3-21-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Categorical Exclusion for Certain Ski Area Permit Actions

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability; reissuance of interim directive.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service is reissuing an interim directive to guide its employees in complying with the National Environmental Policy Act when issuance of a ski area permit is a purely ministerial action and no changes are proposed in permitted activities or facilities. The interim directive implements a provision of the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996, which states that reissuance of a ski area permit for activities similar in nature and amount to the activities authorized under the previous permit shall not constitute a major Federal action. This interim directive, numbered ID 1909.15-2000-1, reissues without change the interim direction previously issued to Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook, in ID 1909.15-98-1, which was published in the **Federal Register** on September 9, 1998, and was issued effective September 24, 1998. The proposed interim directive was previously published for notice and comment in the **Federal Register** on October 27, 1997 (62 FR 55571).

DATES: Interim directive (ID) 1909.15-2000-1 is effective March 24, 2000, and expires September 24, 2001, unless the direction in the ID is incorporated in an amendment to Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 before the expiration date.

ADDRESSES: Copies of interim directive 1909.15-2000-1 are available electronically from the Forest Service via the World Wide Web/Internet at http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/fsh/1909.15/id_1909.15_2000_1.txt or by contacting the Forest Service, USDA, Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources Management Staff (Mail Stop

1125), P. O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090 (telephone 202-205-1706).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ken Karkula, Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources Management Staff (202-205-1426).

Dated: March 16, 2000.

Paul Brouha,

Acting Deputy Chief for National Forest System.

[FR Doc. 00-7041 Filed 3-21-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business—Cooperative Service

Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Rural Business—Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed collection; comments requested.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Rural Business—Cooperative Service's intention to request an extension for a currently approved information collection in support of the program for 7 CFR Part 1942-G Rural Business Enterprise Grants and Television Demonstration Grants.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by May 22, 2000 to be assured of consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Carole Boyko, Rural Development Loan Specialist, Rural Business—Cooperative Service, USDA, Specialty Lenders Division, Stop 3325, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-3325. Telephone: (202) 720-0661.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: RBS/Rural Business Enterprise Grants and Television Demonstration Grants.

OMB Number: 0570-0132.

Expiration Date of Approval: May 31, 2000.

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

Abstract: The objective of the RBEG program is to facilitate the development of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas. This purpose is achieved through grants made by RBS to public bodies and nonprofit corporations. Television Demonstration grants are available to private nonprofit public television systems to provide information on agriculture and other issues of importance to farmers and the