

—Government Comments; Document CX/FBT 02/8

7. Consideration of Analytical Methods; Document CX/FBT 02/9

8. Other Business, Future Work and Date and Place of Next Session

In advance of these meetings, the U.S. Delegate to the Task Force will have assigned responsibility for development of U.S. positions on these issues to members of government. The individuals assigned responsibility will be named at this meeting and will take comment on and develop draft U.S. positions. All interested parties are invited to provide information and comments on the above issues, or on any other issues that may be brought before the Task Force.

Public Meeting

At the January 9th public meeting, the issues will be described, discussed, and attendees will have the opportunity to pose questions and offer comments. At the February 12th public meeting, draft United States' positions on the issues will be described, discussed, and attendees will have the opportunity to pose questions and offer comments. Comments may also be sent to the FSIS Docket Room (see **ADDRESSES**). Please state that your comments relate to Task Force activities and specify which issues your comments address.

Additional Public Notification

Public awareness of all segments of rulemaking and policy development is important. Consequently, in an effort to better ensure that minorities, women, and persons with disabilities are aware of this notice, FSIS will announce it and provide copies of this **Federal Register** publication in the FSIS Constituent Update. FSIS provides a weekly 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 effect or would be of interest to our constituents/stakeholders. The 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.

For more information and to be added to the constituent fax list, fax your request to

the Congressional and Public Affairs Office, at (202) 720-5704.

Done at Washington, DC on: January 8, 2002.

F. Edward Scarbrough,

U.S. Manager for Codex Alimentarius.

[FR Doc. 02-739 Filed 1-8-02; 1:15 pm]

BILLING CODE 3410-DM-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Moose Post Fire Project, Flathead National Forest, Flathead County, Montana

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; Intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a proposal to manage forest resources within and adjacent to the Moose Fire affected area, which burned 70,000 acres in August–September of 2001 (approximately 35,000 acres burned on lands administrated by the Forest Service). The project area is on the Glacier View Ranger District, Flathead National Forest, and is bordered on the east by Glacier National Park and the North Fork of the Flathead River, on the north by the Coal Creek State Forest, and on the west by the Whitefish Divide. The city of Columbia Falls, Montana is located about 10 air miles to the southeast.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing on or before 30 days after publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency and made available for public review in May 2002. No date has yet been determined for filing the final EIS.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Jimmy DeHerrera, District Ranger, P.O. Box 190340, Hungry Horse, Montana 59919 or call (406) 387-3800.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michele Draggoo, Planning Team Leader, (406) 387-3827.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Moose Fire created a situation that is very favorable for the development of spruce beetle and Douglas-fir beetle epidemic conditions. The fire severely weakened or killed large numbers of spruce and Douglas-fir, and the beetles are well adapted to capitalize on such events. Spruce bark beetles were found in endemic levels prior to the fire and Douglas-fir bark beetles were building in several areas across the Flathead

National Forest including in the vicinity of the Moose Fire area.

Beetle numbers can rapidly build when they are suddenly presented with abundant food and breeding habitat such as provided by the many acres of dead and stressed trees within the Moose Fire area. Once the adult beetles emerge from the fire stressed trees, they will search for the next nearest source of food. They are capable of flying about five miles in search of habitat, thus posing a very real threat to mature, larger diameter spruce and Douglas-fir trees outside the fire area.

Fire killed trees in the Moose Fire area have already started falling and will continue to come down over the next 15-20 years. This will result in extremely heavy fuel loads adjacent to private property and the administrative sites. If a fire does occur in these areas, the fuel accumulations, fuel continuity and profile would make the fire difficult to contain and control. A large high intensity fire would likely again threaten or burn private property, administrative sites and valuable forest resources.

Fire-killed trees also do not typically maintain their merchantability as wood products for more than 1 to 3 years, depending on their species and size. Sapwood staining, checking, woodborer damage, and decay will deleteriously affect volume after that time. Smaller diameter trees typically will not be merchantable within a year while larger diameter trees can retain their merchantability longer but will lose their value as wood products as time goes on. Removing an appropriate amount of fire-affected trees while considering ecological needs, before they lose their timber value and starting the reforestation process helps facilitate meeting desired conditions within the Moose Fire Project area.

The proposed action includes the following resource management activities: salvage trees that were burned on approximately 4300 to 5300 acres; use a combination of pheromone baiting, trap trees, and funnel trees to help address existing and future spruce bark beetle and Douglas-fir bark beetle concerns; and the reduce fuels in urban/interface and administrative site areas. Approximately 1000 acres are proposed for salvage in inventoried roadless lands. Planting conifer seedlings and making sure that best management practices would be maintained on roads used for the salvage would also be included in this project. Additionally, road access would be changed in two grizzly bear subunits to meet the Flathead Forest Plan's Amendment 19 ten-year goals and objectives, relative to

grizzly bear security. Approximately 22 miles of open yearlong/seasonally open road would be restricted yearlong within the Werner Creek and Lower Big Creek grizzly bear subunits. Also, approximately 57 miles of road would be decommissioned in both grizzly bear subunits.

The purpose and need for the actions are to: decrease potential mortality cause by bark beetles to remaining live Douglas-fir and spruce trees within and outside the Moose fire are; recover merchantable wood fiber affected by the Moose Fire in timely manner to support local communities and contribute to the long-term yield of forest products; and to reduce future fire risk and hazard by reducing future fuel accumulations caused by the Moose Fire adjacent to private property or administrative sites.

This EIS will tier to the Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and EIS of January 1986, and its subsequent amendments, which provide overall guidance for land management activities on the Flatheads National Forest.

Preliminary issues and concerns include effects of treatments on inventoried roadless lands, effects of treatments on riparian areas, effects of treatments on recreational motorized access, and effects of treatments on threatened/endangered species such as bull trout and grizzly bears.

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 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 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 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).

The Responsible Official is the Forest Supervisor of the Flathead National Forest, 1935 3rd Avenue East, Kalispell, Montana 59901. The Forest Supervisor will make a decision regarding this proposal considering the comments and response, environmental consequences discussed in the final EIS, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The decision and rationale for the decision will be documented in a Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to appeal under applicable Forest Service regulations.

Dated: January 4, 2002.

Cathy Barbouletos,

Forest Supervisor—Flathead National Forest.

[FR Doc. 02-612 Filed 1-9-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 010302C]

Fisheries off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Notice of Availability of Observer Coverage Plan

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of availability of Observer Coverage Plan for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces availability of the Observer Coverage Plan for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery pursuant to Amendment 13 (bycatch provisions) to the Pacific Coast

Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Yvonne deReynier or Becky Renko (Northwest Region, NMFS), phone: 206-526-6140; fax: 206-526-6736 and e-mail: yvonne.dereynier@noaa.gov, becky.renko@noaa.gov. Copies of the Observer Coverage Plan may also be obtained from these contacts.

Electronic Access

This **Federal Register** document is also accessible via the internet at the website of the Office of the Federal Register: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/su-docs/aces/aces140.html>. The Observer Coverage Plan is accessible at <http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/fram/Observer>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS approved Amendment 13 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP on December 21, 2000. Amendment 13 implements the bycatch requirements of the Sustainable Fisheries Act Amendments of 1996. Among other things, Amendment 13 authorizes an at-sea observer program in fulfillment of the requirement that a standardized reporting methodology for bycatch be established. Federal funding was obtained, and the observer program was initiated in August 2001.

Amendment 13 states that details of how observer coverage will be distributed across the West Coast groundfish fleet will be described in an observer coverage plan and that NMFS will publish an announcement of the authorization of the observer program and description of the observer coverage plan in the **Federal Register**. To comply with this requirement, the Northwest Fisheries Science Center developed an initial Observer Coverage Plan (Sampling Plan and Logistics for the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP), Fall 2001), which may be obtained from the individuals listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section. The plan outlines the initial goals and methodology of the WCGOP, and describes the initial observer deployments. The program is expected to evolve as it progresses, and new information becomes available.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: January 7, 2002.

Jon Kurland,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 02-647 Filed 1-9-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S