

Notices

Federal Register

Vol. 68, No. 2

Friday, January 3, 2003

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

McNally Fire/Sherman Pass Restoration Project

AGENCY: USDA Forest Service.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Department of agriculture, forest Service is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) to address the impacts of the McNally Fire. In July and August of 2002, the Sequoia National Forest experienced the largest wildfire in its history. The Sequoia National Forest proposes to begin long-term ecological restoration on portions the fire damaged areas on the Cannell Meadow Ranger District that are outside of inventoried roadless areas. The McNally Fire/Sherman Pass Restoration Project would implement restoration measures on those watersheds containing conifer habitats that are outside the roadless areas and that burned with a moderate to high severity leading to heavy tree mortality. The fire produced adverse effects to forest resources such as soils, riparian areas, and wildlife habitat. The fire also killed thousands of trees that if left untreated will contribute to high loading over time and re-create high risks for another catastrophic fire. The goal of the project is to move the burned areas toward the desired conditions described in the Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA).

DATES: The public is asked to submit any issues (points of concern, debate, dispute, or disagreement) regarding potential effects of the proposed action by February 12, 2003. The draft EIS is expected to be available for public comment in August 2003 and the final

EIS is expected to be published in November 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: McNally Fire/Sherman Pass Restoration Project USDA Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest, 900 W. Grand Avenue, Porterville, CA 93257.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Simonson, Ecosystem Manager, Sequoia National Forest, at the Address listed above. The phone number is (559) 784-1500.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

In light of desired conditions specified in our Forest Plan and the existing conditions within the project area outlined above, there is an immediate need to:

1. Re-establish burned conifer stands to provide important habitat for such old forest species as the spotted owl, fisher, marten, and goshawk within 250 years.
2. Restore ground cover to soils left unprotected by the fire in order to minimize erosion in the short term, to protect from catastrophic fires and to replace organic material over the long term.
3. Reduce existing fuels to 10-15 tons per acre in order to reduce the risk of another stand-replacing fire which would damage recovering habitats and riparian condition, thereby setting back the clock on development of old forest habitat and riparian restoration.

Proposed Action

This project proposes to restore approximately 6,000 acres of conifer habitat and riparian areas with a combination of treatment methods. Within these 6,000 acres, approximately 1,600 acres are within Riparian Conservation Areas (RCA). All the areas proposed for treatment are to be managed as either RCAs or Old Forest Emphasis (OFE) areas following direction in the Forest Plan as amended.

Treatments that would be applied in a specific area depend upon the specific restoration need, the slope of the terrain, the degree of conifer mortality, and the land management allocation. Where possible, dead trees that have commercial value and that are not needed to meet resource objectives would be removed from the site through a commercial timber sale, as fuelwood, or as other products. This commercial

component is important both to ensure viability of the operation and to generate funds to finance related restoration activities within the project area.

Felling of dead trees across the contour of the slope is proposed to stabilize sediment. Reforestation with conifers is proposed to re-establish habitats occupied by late seral species prior to the fire and in order to link together suitable remnant habitats and restore large expanses of old forest habitat. Large-diameter snags and logs will be retained in sufficient quantity to maintain legacy structures for both the late-seral species and their prey. Vegetation control by hand removal is proposed during the first five years after planting to help ensure survival of planted trees.

Riparian Conservation Areas (RCA) would also be treated to restore riparian values by re-establishing vegetation, reducing excessive fuel loadings, stabilizing stream channels and sediment, and improving ground cover conditions. Contour felling of dead trees is proposed to stabilize sediment. Planting of native plants such as conifers, willows, and alders is proposed to re-establish the riparian corridor.

Responsible Official

The responsible official is Forest Supervisor Arthur L. Gaffrey, Sequoia National Forest, 900 West Grand Ave., Porterville, California 93257.

Comment Requested

The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes that, at this early stage, it is very important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of a draft EIS must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts the 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 Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 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 persons 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 EIS. To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible.

Dated: December 23, 2002.

Arthur L. Gaffrey,

Forest Supervisor, Sequoia National Forest, USDA, Forest Service.

[FR Doc. 03-1 Filed 1-2-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area (SRA) Advisory Council

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: An Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Advisory Council meeting will convene in Stayton, Oregon on Monday, January 13, 2003. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m., and will conclude at approximately 8:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the South Room of the Stayton Community Center located on 400 West Virginia Street in Stayton, Oregon.

The Opal Creek Wilderness and Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Act of 1996 (Opal Creek Act) (Pub. L. 104-208) directed the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is comprised of thirteen members representing state, county and city governments, and representatives of various organizations, which include mining industry, environmental organizations, inholders in Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area, economic development, Indian tribes, adjacent landowners and recreation interests. The council provides advice to the Secretary of Agriculture on preparation of a comprehensive Opal Creek Management Plan for the SRA, and consults on a periodic and regular basis on the management of the area. Tentative agenda items include the following topics: Discuss project work plans and timelines, continue developing monitoring and

transportation plans, and give update on management plan appeal status.

A direct public comment period is tentatively scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. Time allotted for individual presentations will be limited to 3 minutes. Written comments are encouraged, particularly if the material cannot be presented within the time limits of the comment period. Written comments may be submitted prior to January 13 meeting by sending them to Designated Federal Official Rodney Stewart at the address given below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For more information regarding this meeting, contact Designated Federal Official Rodney Stewart; Willamette National Forest, Detroit Ranger District, HC 73 Box 320, Mill City, OR 97630; (505) 853-3366.

Dated: December 24, 2002.

Y. Robert Iwamoto,

Deputy Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 03-18 Filed 1-2-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Notice of Lincoln County Resource Advisory Committee Meeting

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463) and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-393) the Kootenai National Forests' Lincoln County Resource Advisory Committee will meet on January 13, February 3, March 3, and April 7, 2003 at 6:30 p.m. in Libby, Montana for business meetings. The meetings are open to the public.

DATES: January 13, February 3, March 3, and April 7, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at the Kootenai National Forest Supervisor's Office, located at 1101 U.S. Highway 2 West, Libby, MT.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Barbara Edgmon, Committee Coordinator, Kootenai National Forest at (406) 293-6211, or e-mail bedgmon@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Agenda topics include status of approved projects, accepting project proposals for consideration and receiving public comment. If the meeting date or location is changed, notice will be posted in the

local newspapers, including the Daily Intertake based in Kalispell, MT.

Dated: December 23, 2002.

Bob Castaneda,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 03-32 Filed 1-2-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Plumas County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC)

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Meetings.

SUMMARY: The Plumas County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will hold meetings on: January 10, 2003, in Greenville, California; February 21, 2003, in Portola, California; and a third on March 7, 2003, at a location to be announced at a later date. The purpose of the January meeting will be to discuss the Cycle 3 funding process and to review the progress of Cycle 1 projects under the Title 2 provisions of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. The purpose of the February meeting will be to select Cycle 2 projects for recommendation to the Plumas National Forest Supervisor for funding consideration, while the meeting in March will be to review and discuss the Forest Service approved Cycle 2 projects.

DATES AND ADDRESSES: The January 10 meeting will take place from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m., at the Catholic Church Social Hall, 209 Jesse Street, Greenville, California. The February 21 meeting will take place from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., at the Eastern Plumas Health Care Educational building, 500 First Avenue, Portola, California. The March 7 meeting will start at 9 a.m., at a location to be announced at a later date.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lee Anne Schramel Taylor, Forest Coordinator, USDA, Plumas National Forest, P.O. Box 11500/159 Lawrence Street, Quincy, CA, 95971; (530) 283-7850; or by E-MAIL eataylor@fs.fed.us. Final agendas are posted one week prior to the meeting on the Internet at: <http://www.fs.r5.fs.fed.us/pay2states/plumas>. Prior meeting minutes and agendas are available on the same site.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Agenda items for the January 10 meeting include: (1) Forest Service update regarding RAC general administration, (2) Review Cycle 1 project accomplishments to date; (3) Consider