Notices

Federal Register
Vol. 68, No. 30
Thursday, February 13, 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

Office of the Secretary

[Docket No. 03–001–3]

Declaration of Extraordinary Emergency Because of Exotic Newcastle Disease in Arizona

Exotic Newcastle disease (END) has been confirmed in the State of Arizona. The disease has been confirmed in backyard poultry, which are raised on private premises for hobby, exhibition, and personal consumption. Previously, END had been confirmed in the States of California and Nevada. The Secretary of Agriculture signed a declaration of extraordinary emergency with respect to END in California on January 6, 2003 (*see* 68 FR 1432, Docket No. 03–001–1, published January 10, 2003), and a second declaration of extraordinary emergency with respect to END in Nevada on January 17, 2003 (*see* 68 FR 3507, Docket No. 03–001–2, published January 24, 2003).

END is a contagious and fatal viral disease affecting domestic, wild, and caged poultry and birds. It is one of the most infectious diseases of poultry in the world, and is so virulent that many birds die without showing any clinical signs. A death rate of almost 100 percent can occur in unvaccinated poultry flocks. END can infect and cause death even in vaccinated poultry. This disease in poultry and birds is characterized by respiratory signs accompanied by nervous manifestations, gastrointestinal lesions, and swelling of the head.

END is spread primarily through direct contact between healthy birds or poultry and the bodily discharges of infected birds or poultry. Within an infected flock, END is transmitted by direct contact, contaminated feeding and watering equipment, and aerosols produced by coughing, gasping, and other respiratory disturbances. Dissemination between flocks over long distances is often due to movement of contaminated equipment and service personnel, such as vaccination crews. Movement of carrier birds and those in an incubating stage accounts for most of the outbreaks in the pet bird industry.

The existence of END in Arizona represents a threat to the U.S. poultry and bird industries. It constitutes a real danger to the national economy and a potential serious burden on interstate and foreign commerce. The United States Department of Agriculture (the Department) has reviewed the measures being taken by Arizona to control and eradicate END and has consulted with the appropriate State Government and Indian tribal officials in Arizona. Based on such review and consultation, the Department has determined that the measures being taken by the State are inadequate to control or eradicate END. Therefore, the Department has determined that an extraordinary emergency exists because of END in Arizona.

This declaration of extraordinary emergency authorizes the Secretary to (1) hold, seize, treat, apply other remedial actions to, destroy (including preventative slaughter), or otherwise dispose of, any animal, article, facility, or means of conveyance if the Secretary determines the action is necessary to prevent the dissemination of END and (2) prohibit or restrict the movement or use within the State of Arizona, or any portion of the State of Arizona, of any animal or article, means of conveyance, or facility if the Secretary determines that the prohibition or restriction is necessary to prevent the dissemination of END. The appropriate State Government and Indian tribal officials in Arizona have been informed of these facts.

Effective Date: This declaration of extraordinary emergency shall become effective February 7, 2003.

Ann M. Veneman,

Secretary of Agriculture.

[FR Doc. 03–3561 Filed 2–12–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Beech Fork Coal Lease and Project Specific Forest Plan Amendment

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement, a Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP) amendment, issue a call for coal and other resource information, and notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze the environmental impacts of leasing three federal coal reserve tracts. The three tracts total 1,210.44 acres and underlie lands administered by the USFS. The proposed development of the three federal coal reserve tracts involves underground mining of coal using room-and-pillar mining methods. No surface disturbance related to mine openings, haul roads, or processing will occur on the federal tracts. The tracts are adjacent to an existing underground coal mine on private lands.

In conjunction with the EIS, a Land Resource Management Plan Amendment will be prepared in a cooperative effort between the USFS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Office of Surface Mining (OSM). As part of the initiation of the LRMP Amendment, a Call for Coal and Other Resource Information is being made. This data request solicits (1) information on the coal resource development potential of the three proposed tracts and (2) resources that may be affected by coal development for lands in the project area.

Authority: The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 (MLS) authorizes the leasing of federal coal in tracts that permit the mining of all economically extractable coal. The Daniel Boone National Forest Land Resource Management Plan provides overall guidance for land management activities, including extraction of mineral resources. The Forest Plan provides for the consideration of lease proposals in the project area and directs that special stipulations be used to protect surface resources. The LRMP Amendment is being prepared to update the 1985 Forest Plan to address leasing of two of the three tracts, as the Tennessee Valley Authority previously owned them.

Since the passage of the MLA, the federal government has had the authority to lease minerals on federal lands. The act requires that the lands be included in a comprehensive land use plan, and the lease be compatible with the plan and meet the requirements of