

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review

A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency's notice of availability appears in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate at that time. To be the most helpful, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible and may address the adequacy of the statement or merits of the alternatives discussed.

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*, 443 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. *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 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 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.)

Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21)

Dated: March 17, 2003.

Thomas L. Tidwell,

Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Wrangell-Petersburg Resource Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Wrangell-Petersburg Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will meet from 1 p.m. until 5:15 p.m. on Friday, April 4, and from 8 a.m. until 12 noon, Saturday, April 5, 2003, in Petersburg, Alaska. The purpose of this meeting is to review, discuss and potentially recommend for funding proposals received pursuant to title II, Public Law 106-393, H.R. 2389, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, also called the "Payments to States" Act. Public testimony regarding the proposals will also be taken.

DATES: The meeting will be held commencing at 1 p.m. on Friday, April 4 through 12 noon, Saturday, April 5, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Holy Cross House, Petersburg Lutheran Church, 407 Fram Street, Petersburg, Alaska.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Chip Weber, Wrangell District Ranger, P.O. Box 51, Wrangell, AK 99929, phone (907) 874-2323, e-mail cweber@fs.fed.us, or Patty Grantham, Petersburg District Ranger, P.O. Box 1328, Petersburg, AK 99833, phone (907) 772-3871, email pgrantham@fs.fed.us. For further information on RAC history, operations, and the application process, a Web site is available at www.fs.fed.us/r10/payments.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This meeting will focus on the review and discussion of proposals received by the RAC for funding under Title II of the Payments to States legislation (Pub. L. 106-393). No new proposals (initial reading) will be discussed at this

meeting. This meeting will serve as the second reading for proposals received for the February 2003 meeting; the RAC may recommend funding for some or all of these proposals during this meeting. The RAC may also review, discuss or make recommendations for funding for projects received for the January 2003 meeting. The meeting is open to the public. Public input opportunity will be provided and individuals will have the opportunity to address the committee at that time. It is anticipated that this will be the last meeting of the RAC until sometime in the fall of 2003.

Dated: March 17, 2003.

Olleke E. Rappe-Daniels,

Acting Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

[03-a-c]

Opportunity To Comment on the Applicant for the Mississippi Area

AGENCY: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: GIPSA requests comments on the applicant for designation to provide official services in the Mississippi geographic area.

DATES: Comments must be postmarked or electronically dated on or before April 23, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments must be submitted in writing to USDA, GIPSA, Janet M. Hart, Chief, Review Branch, Compliance Division, STOP 3604, room 1647-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-3604; FAX 202-690-2755; e-mail Janet.M.Hart@usda.gov. All comments received will be made available for public inspection at the above address located at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., during regular business hours.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Janet M. Hart at 202-720-8525, e-mail Janet.M.Hart@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This action has been reviewed and determined not to be a rule or regulation as defined in Executive Order 12866 and Departmental Regulation 1512-1; therefore, the Executive Order and Departmental Regulation do not apply to this action.

In the January 29, 2003, **Federal Register** (68 FR 4445), GIPSA