

estimate of number of acres is known at this time. No permanent or temporary road construction is proposed within the inventorized roadless area.

Reconstruction of the Herman Gulch Road is being considered to improve the route for firefighter and public access during emergency situations and address soil erosion issues.

No treatments would be proposed within INFISH defined riparian habitat conservation areas. No treatment within old-growth forest is planned.

Alternatives: This EIS will evaluate alternative methods to meet the designated Purpose and Need for the action:

1. Minimize the risks to water quality in the event of wildland fire in the Basin Creek Municipal Watershed.

2. Reduce the potential of damage to public and private property and structures within the project area from wildland fire.

3. Modify vegetative conditions to increase firefighter and public safety.

At least one alternative will exclude any treatments within the inventorized roadless area. As required by NEPA, a "no action" alternative will be analyzed as a baseline for gauging the potential impacts of action alternatives. Forest Plan Visual Quality Objectives for the project area are fairly restrictive. Proposed treatments may require a Forest Plan amendment.

Public Involvement: The public will be invited to comment on the Draft EIS during a public open house, field trip, and in writing to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. The location and time of the open house and time of the site field visit will be announced in the local news media, as dates are determined. The public may contact the Forest to have their name added to a project mailing list.

DATES: Initial comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing no later than 30 days from the publication of this notice of intent.

ADDRESSES: The responsible official is Dale Bosworth, Chief of the Forest Service. Please send written comments to Thomas K. Reilly, Forest Supervisor, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725. Comments may also be electronically submitted to r1_b_d_comments@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Egeline, Acting Butte District Ranger, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, 1820 Meadowlark Lane, Butte, MT 59701, or phone (406) 494-0219.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Public participation is important to this analysis. Part of the goal of public

involvement is to identify additional issues and to refine general issues. Scoping notices were mailed to the public on March 29, 2002 and February 11, 2003.

People may visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. Two periods are specifically designated for comments on the analysis: (1) during the scoping process, and (2) during the draft EIS period.

During the scoping process, the Forest Service seeks additional information and comments from individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action, and federal, state, and local agencies. The Forest Service invites written comments and suggestions on this action, particularly in terms of issues and alternative development.

The draft EIS is anticipated to be available for review in June 2003. The final EIS planned for completion in December 2003.

The Environmental Protection Agency will publish the notice of availability of the draft Environmental Impact Statement in the **Federal Register**. The Forest will also publish a legal notice of its availability in the Montana Standard Newspaper, Butte, Montana. A 45-day comment period on the draft EIS will begin the day after the legal notice is published.

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 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 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

The responsible official will make the decision on this proposal after considering comments and responses, environmental consequences discussed in the final EIS, applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The decision and reasons for the decision will be documented in a Record of Decision.

Dated: April 7, 2003.

Thomas K. Reilly,
Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 03-9010 Filed 4-11-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Lower Big Creek, Kootenai National Forest, Lincoln County, MT

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The USDA—Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to disclose the environmental effects of timber harvest, prescribed burning, and road management in the Lower Big Creek Decision Area on the Rexford Ranger District of the Kootenai National Forest. The Decision Area is located approximately 15 miles southwest of Eureka, Montana.

DATES: Written comments and suggestions should be postmarked or received within 30 days following publication of this notice.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and suggestions concerning the scope of the analysis should be sent to Glen M. McNitt, District Ranger, Rexford Ranger District, 1299 U.S. Highway 93 N, Eureka, MT 59917.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Chris Fox, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Rexford Ranger District, Phone: (406) 296-2536.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Decision Area contains approximately 64,000 acres of land within the Kootenai National Forest. Proposed activities within the Decision Area include all or portions of the following areas: T34–35N, R29–30W, PMM, Lincoln County, Montana.

All proposed activities are outside the boundaries of any roadless area or any areas considered for inclusion to the National Wilderness System as recommended by the Kootenai National Forest Plan or by any past or present legislative wilderness proposals, with the exception of approximately 840 acres of underburning-only in the Big Creek Inventoried Roadless Area.

Purpose and Need: The purpose and need for the project is to: (1) Reduce fuel accumulations to decrease the likelihood that fires would become large stand-replacing wildfires; (2) Restore characteristic vegetation patterns (patch sizes and stand structure) on the landscape; (3) Provide a transportation system that increases security for grizzly bears, reduces impacts to aquatic resources, improves riparian wildlife habitat, and insures economical and safe access; and (4) Respond to the social and economic needs of the public.

Proposed Activities: The Forest Service proposes to use regeneration harvest on approximately 2,650 acres, shelterwood-commercial thin harvest on approximately 350 acres, commercial thinning on approximately 560 acres, and roadside salvage and post and pole harvest on approximately 75 acres.

The Proposed Action would result in nineteen openings over 40 acres, ranging from 98 to 530 acres. A 60-day public review period, and approval by the Regional Forester for exceeding the 40 acre limitation for regeneration harvest, would be required prior to the signing of the Record of Decision. This 60-day period is initiated with this Notice of Intent.

The Proposed Action includes approximately 3,625 acres of prescribed burning in association with timber harvest, and approximately 1,100 acres of prescribed burning without timber harvest.

The Proposed Action also includes maintenance activities on portions of approximately 109 miles of road to meet Best Management Practices; decommissioning approximately 25 miles of closed roads; placing 14 miles of roads (which are currently restricted year-long to motor vehicles) in storage; and reconstructing approximately 1.7 miles of existing road.

The Proposed Action includes precommercial thinning of sapling-sized trees on approximately 300 acres within

managed plantations and natural stands that have regenerated after wildfire. Precommercial thinning would not occur in lynx habitat.

Forest Plan Amendments: The Proposed Action includes two project-specific Forest Plan amendments necessary to meet the project's objectives:

An amendment to allow harvest in 15 units adjacent to existing openings in Management Area (MA) 12 (Big Game Summer Range). The amendment would be needed to suspend Wildlife and Fish Standard #7 and Timber Standard #2 for this area. These standards state that movement corridors and adjacent hiding cover be retained. The resulting opening sizes more closely correlate to natural disturbance patterns. Snags and down woody material would be left to provide wildlife habitat and maintain soil productivity.

An amendment to allow MA 12 open road density to be managed at 1.18 miles/square mile during project implementation. The amendment would be needed to suspend Facilities Standard #3, which states that open road density should be maintained at 0.75 miles/square mile. The open road density would return to 0.74 following project completion.

Range of Alternatives: The Forest Service will consider a range of alternatives. One of these will be the "no action" alternative, in which none of the proposed activities will be implemented. Additional alternatives will be considered to achieve the project's purpose and need for action, and to respond to specific resource issues and public concerns.

Public Involvement and Scoping: In November 2002, efforts were made to involve the public in considering management opportunities within the Decision Area. A scoping package was mailed for public review on November 5, 2002. A field trip was held on November 15, 2002; an open house was held on November 21, 2002. Comments received prior to this notice will be included in the documentation for the EIS.

Estimated Dates for Filing: While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 30 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the Draft EIS (DEIS). The DEIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by May 2003. At that time EPA will publish a Notice of Availability (NOA) of the DEIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the DEIS will be 45

days from the date the EPA publishes the NOA in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in the management of this area participate at that time.

The final EIS (FEIS) is scheduled to be completed by August 2003. In the FEIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to comments and responses received during the comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the DEIS, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making a decision regarding the proposal.

Reviewer's Obligations: The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of DEIS' 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 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 DEIS 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 and respond to them in the FEIS.

To be most helpful, comments on the DEIS should be as specific as possible, and may address the adequacy of the statement or the merit of the alternatives discussed. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1503.3) for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Responsible Official: As the Forest Supervisor of the Kootenai National Forest, 1101 U.S. Highway 2 West, Libby, MT 59923, I am the Responsible Official. As the Responsible Official, I will decide if the proposed project will be implemented. I will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. I have delegated the responsibility for preparing the DEIS and FEIS to Glen M. McNitt, District Ranger, Rexford Ranger District.

Dated: April 3, 2003.

Bob Castaneda,

Forest Supervisor, Kootenai National Forest.

[FR Doc. 03-8988 Filed 4-11-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will meet on May 5, 2003 in Weaverville, California.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the selection of Title II projects under 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.

DATES: The meeting will be held on May 5, 2003 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Trinity County Office of Education Conference Room, 201 Memorial Drive, Weaverville, California.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ann Garland, Designated Federal Official, USDA, Six Rivers National Forest, PO Box 68, Willow Creek, CA 95573. Phone: (530) 629-2118. Email: agarland@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The committee will discuss proposed fuels reduction, watershed restoration, and public project. 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.

Dated: April 7, 2003.

S.E. 'Lou' Woltering,

Forest Servisor.

[FR Doc. 03-9016 Filed 4-11-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

National Agricultural Statistics Service

Notice of Intent To Seek Reinstatement of an Information Collection

AGENCY: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget regulations at 5 CFR part

1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the intention of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to seek approval for reinstatement of an information collection, the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by June 18, 2003, to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be mailed to Ginny McBride, NASS Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 5336 South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-2024 or sent electronically to gmcbride@nass.usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Carol House, Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, (202) 720-4333.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey.

OMB Control Number: 0535-0234.

Type of Request: Intent to Seek Approval to Reinstatement an Information Collection.

Abstract: The Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey is conducted every 5 years as authorized by the Census of Agriculture Act of 1997 (Pub. L. No. 105-113). The 2003 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey will use a probability sample from farms that reported irrigation on the 2002 Census of Agriculture. This irrigation survey will provide a comprehensive inventory of farm irrigation practices with detailed data relating to acres irrigated by category of land use, acres and yields of irrigated and non-irrigated crops, quantity of water applied, and method of application to selected crops. Also included will be 2003 expenditures for maintenance and repair of irrigation equipment and facilities; purchase of energy for on-farm pumping of irrigation water; investment in irrigation equipment, facilities, and land improvement; and cost of water received from off-farm water supplies. Irrigation data are used by the farmers, their representatives, government agencies, and many other groups concerned with the irrigation industry. This survey will provide the only source of dependable, comparable irrigation data by State. The National Agricultural Statistics Service will use the information collected only for statistical purposes and will publish the data only as tabulated totals.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information

is estimated to average 30 minutes per response.

Respondents: Farms.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 25,000.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 12,500 hours.

Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained without charge from Ginny McBride, NASS Information Collection Clearance Officer, at (202) 720-5778.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

All responses to this notice will become a matter of public record and be summarized in the request for OMB approval.

Signed in Washington, DC, March 24, 2003.

Carol House,

Associate Administrator.

[FR Doc. 03-9039 Filed 4-11-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-20-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 021203A]

Small Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Oceanographic Surveys in the Hess Deep, Eastern Equatorial Pacific Ocean

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

ACTION: Notice of receipt of application and proposed authorization for a small take exemption; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received an application from the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO) for an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to take small numbers of marine