

10. Designation of old growth habitat (1608 acres).
11. Clean up of illegal garbage dumps where they are encountered.
12. Relocation of the portion of the Audubon Trail currently located in the floodplain of Bidwell Creek and construct two trailheads.
13. Reconstruction and maintenance of 37 miles of roads to accomplish items listed above. Some roads are also being evaluated for addition to the system, or for closure and obliteration.

While the primary focus of the analysis is to identify activities to accomplish ecological restoration, other activities that enhance recreational opportunities, result in better water quality, or move the area toward the Forest Plan's desired future condition (Forest Plan pages IV 125–131) may also be considered in the draft and/or final EIS.

The scope of this analysis is limited to those activities related to the purpose and need and measures necessary to mitigate the effects these activities may have on the environment. The decision will include if, when, how, and where to schedule restoration activities, recreation opportunity enhancement, interpretive activities, water quality improvement actions, resource protection measures, monitoring, and other follow-up activities.

Decision Space

Decision making will be limited to activities relating to the proposed actions. The primary decision to be made will be whether or not to implement the proposed actions listed above, a no-action alternative, or another action alternative that responds to the project's purpose and needs.

Preliminary Issues

Preliminary comments made by the interdisciplinary team were considered in the development of the tentative or preliminary issues. These are as follows: restoration of shortleaf pine on sites where it was historically dominant; reduction of vulnerability of forest stands to threats such as insects, disease, competition from non-native species, and catastrophic wildfire; protection of soils, water, and geological features from degradation caused by non-system roads, dump sites, especially near streams, and protecting riparian corridors and special areas such as the Artesian well, glades, springs, fens, caves, and cliffs; reduction of hazardous fuels build-up and the number of hazard trees that are threats to the public and adjoining landowners; provide lumber and firewood for the

local community, enhancing wildlife habitat by creating openings, restoring open woodland habitats and designating old growth and retaining hollow and cull trees in treatment areas.

Public Participation

The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies, the Osage Tribe, and other individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed actions. Comments received in response to this notice will become a matter of public record. While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments on the proposed actions received within 30 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the draft EIS. Timely comments will be used in preparation of the draft EIS. The scoping process will be used to: Identify potential issues; identify additional alternatives to the proposed action; and, identify potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects). In addition, the public is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision.

Estimated Dates for Filing

The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental protection Agency and available for public review in September 2003. A 45-day comment period will follow publication of a Notice of Availability of the draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. Comments received on the draft EIS will be analyzed and considered in preparation of a final EIS, expected in December 2003. A record of Decision (ROD) will also be issued at that time along with the publication of a Notice of Availability of the final EIS and ROD in the **Federal Register**.

Reviewers Obligation To Comment

The Forest Service believes it is important at this early stage to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of the draft EIS must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal in such a way 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, 513 (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*

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 of the draft EIS in order that substantive comments and objections are 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. 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.

Responsible Official

The responsible official for this environmental impact statement is Ronnie Raum, Forest Supervisor, Mark Twain National Forest.

Dated: April 14, 2003.

Katherine W. Stuart,

District Ranger, Potosi/Fredericktown Ranger District, Mark Twain National Forest.

[FR Doc. 03–10428 Filed 4–28–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Monument Fire Recovery Project-Whitman Unit, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Baker County, OR

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 (EIS) on a proposal to assist the recovery of the area burned in 2002 by the Monument Fire. The EIS will include proposals that salvage fire-killed and dying trees, implement reforestation, and projects to recover damaged riparian and aquatic resources. The 3,300-acre project area is located on the Whitman Unit-Unity District. The project is approximately 7 air miles southeast of Unity, Oregon, and within the West Fork of Camp Creek subwatershed. Implementation of management actions is planned for fiscal year 2004. The agency gives notice of the full environmental analysis and decision making process that will occur on the proposal so that interested and

affected people may become aware of how they can participate in the process and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received in writing by May 30, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Dick Haines, District Ranger, Whitman Unit-Unity Office, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, P.O. Box 39, Unity, Oregon 97884.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Direct questions about the proposed action and EIS to Roger LeMaster, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Whitman Unit-Unity Office, P.O. Box 39, Unity, Oregon 97884, telephone (541) 446-3351.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In July and August of 2002, the Monument Fire burned approximately 24,300 acres; approximately 4,100 acres occurred on the Wallowa-Whitman National forest, including 628 acres of private land. The remainder of the fire (approximately 20,200 acres) occurred on the Malheur National Forest. The Monument Fire Recovery Project-Whitman Unit (3,300 acres) includes those portions of the Monument Fire that occurred within the West Camp Creek sub-watershed on the Wallowa-Whitman National forest.

Purpose and Need for Action. The identified purpose and need for these actions here and now are to: Recover potential value of fire-killed and dying trees for wood products and to support the local economy; reforest non-stocked areas that were burned for wildlife habitat and riparian habitat recovery; allow recovery of herbaceous, native vegetation for wildlife and domestic use; and maintain or improve water quality for sediment reduction into stream channels in compliance with INFISH (Regional Forester Amendment #4 to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and resource Management Plan) guidelines.

Proposed Action. The proposed action is to salvage fire-killed and dying trees by helicopter on approximately 359 acres, by skyline logging systems on approximately 381 acres, and by tractor on 39 acres. The total salvage volume would be approximately 9 million board feet. Salvage would be limited to upland areas, outside of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. Approximately 1/4-mile of temporary roads would be required for access to units. Approximately 5.4 miles of closed roads would be opened for salvage (reclosed after salvage); approximately 10.6 miles of currently open roads would be closed; and approximately 32 miles of road maintenance would be required for

haul routes. Reforest approximately 1205 acres in salvaged units, old regeneration units, and other burn areas; reforest (with riparian vegetation and conifers) 292 acres of high and moderate severity burned streamside and riparian wetlands, along the North and South Forks of West Camp Creek and its tributaries; fall snags to increase plantations survival and increase down, woody material; treat noxious weed sites disturbed during fire suppression efforts and new existing noxious weed sites; and rest the burn area to allow recovery of herbaceous, native vegetation for wildlife and domestic use.

Preliminary Issues. Preliminary issues identified include: timely recovery of fire-killed and dying trees; effect of salvage on soils; retention of snags; effects of road closures on public access; effects of salvage activities on sediment to stream channels; effect of salvage on wildlife populations and reduced habitat; noxious weeds infestation and expansion; economic viability; and effects on recreation/visuals.

Possible Alternatives. A full reasonable range of alternatives will be considered, including a "no-action" alternative in which none of the activities proposed above would be implemented. Based on the preliminary issues identified through scoping, the action alternatives could differ in: The level of salvage; the type of logging systems used for salvage; the amount and location of roads needed to access salvage units; and the level of road closures proposed.

Scoping Process. The scoping process will include: Identifying potential issues; identifying major issues to be analyzed in depth; eliminating non-significant issues or those previously covered by a relevant environmental analysis; considering additional alternatives based on goals/objectives which will be derived from issues recognized during scoping activities; and identifying potential environmental effects of this proposed action and alternatives (*i.e.*, direct, indirect, and cumulative effects and connected actions). Public participation will be sought at several points during the analysis process. The public will be kept informed of the EIS process through the quarterly publication of the "Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Schedule of Purposed Actions" and letters to agencies, organizations, and individuals who have previously indicated their interest in such activities.

Public comment. Public comments about this proposal are requested in order to assist in scoping issues

properly, determining how to best manage the resources, and analyzing environmental effects fully. Comments received to this notice, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality. Where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted, with or without name and address, within a specified number of days.

The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and made available for public review by July 2003. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**. The final EIS is scheduled to be available October 2003.

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 a draft EIS 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 EIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final EIS 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 EIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft EIS 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 EIS 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 Forest Service is the lead agency. The responsible official is the Forest Supervisor, for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The responsible official will decide which, if any, of the proposed projects will be implemented and will document the Monument Fire Recovery Project-Whitman Unit decision and rationale for the decision, in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations (36 CFR part 215).

Dated: April 21, 2003.

John C. Schuyler,
Deputy Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 03-10501 Filed 4-28-03; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Notice of Proposed Changes in the National Handbook of Conservation Practices.

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given of the intention of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to issue a series of new or revised conservation practice standards in its National Handbook of Conservation Practices. These standards include: Anaerobic Digester, Ambient Temperature; Anaerobic Digester, Controlled Temperature; Composting Facility; Constructed Wetland; Fish Raceway or Tank; Hedgerow Planting; Irrigation Water Management; Land Clearing; Land Reconstruction, Abandoned Mined Land; Land Reconstruction, Currently Mined Land; Monitoring Well; Mulching; Pasture and Hayland Planting; Residue Management, Mulch Till; Residue Management, No Till/Strip

Till; Residue Management, Ridge Till; Residue Management, Seasonal; Riparian Forest Buffer; Sediment Basin; Spoil Spreading; Stream Habitat Improvement and Management; Tree/Shrub Establishment; Tree/Shrub Pruning; Upland Wildlife Habitat Management; Waste Facility Cover; Waste Storage Facility; Waste Treatment Lagoon; Waste Utilization; Wetland Creation; Wetland Enhancement; Wetland Restoration; Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management; Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment; and Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation. These standards are used to convey national guidance in developing Field Office Technical Guide Standards used in the States and the Pacific Basin and Caribbean areas. NRCS State Conservationists and Directors for the Pacific Basin and Caribbean areas who choose to adopt these practices for use within their States/areas will incorporate them into Section IV of their Field Office Technical Guide. These practices may be used in resource management systems that treat highly erodible land, or on land determined to be wetland.

EFFECTIVE DATES: Comments will be received on or before May 29, 2003. This series of new or revised conservation practice standards will be adopted after the close of the 30-day period.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Single copies of these standards are available from NRCS-CED in Washington, DC. Please submit individual inquiries and return any comments, in writing, to William Hughey, National Agricultural Engineer, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Post Office Box 2890, Room 6139-S, Washington, DC 20013-2890. The telephone number is (202) 720-5023. The standards are also available, and can be downloaded from the Internet, at: http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/practice_stds.html.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 343 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 requires NRCS to make available, for public review and comment, proposed revisions to conservation practice standards used to carry out the highly erodible land and wetland provisions of the law. For the next 30 days, NRCS will receive comments on the proposed changes. Following that period, a determination will be made by NRCS regarding disposition of those comments, and a final determination of change will be made.

Signed in Washington, DC, on April 3, 2003.

Bruce I. Knight,
Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

[FR Doc. 03-10546 Filed 4-28-03; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3410-16-P

COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Agenda and Notice of Public Meeting of the Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma State Advisory Committees

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, that a conference call of the Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma State Advisory Committees to the Commission will convene at 10:30 a.m. and adjourn at 12 p.m. on April 24, 2003. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss civil rights in 5 states and plan future activities.

This conference call is available to the public through the following call-in number: 1-800-923-4217, access code 16409924. Any interested member of the public may call this number and listen to the meeting. Callers can expect to incur charges for calls not initiated using the supplied call-in number or over wireless lines and the Commission will not refund any incurred charges. Callers will incur no charge for calls using the call-in number over land-line connections. Persons with hearing impairments may also follow the proceedings by first calling the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-977-8339 and providing the Service with the conference call number and access code.

To ensure that the Commission secures an appropriate number of lines for the public, persons are asked to register by contacting Melvin L. Jenkins, Director of the Central Regional Office, 913-551-1400 (TDD 913-551-1414), by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, April 23, 2003.

The meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the Commission.

Dated at Washington, DC, April 11, 2003.

Ivy L. Davis,
Chief, Regional Programs Coordination Unit.
[FR Doc. 03-10444 Filed 4-28-03; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 6335-01-P