Commercial Pack Stock FEIS and ROD will identify the levels and terms of commercial pack stock use in the AA and JM Wilderness. This Permit Issuance EIS will authorize these uses in the AA and JM Wildernesses as well as authorize uses on other areas of the Inyo National Forest.

Proposed Action

To meet the purpose and need, the Forest Service proposes to issue long term permits for a variety of commercial pack stock related activities to twelve existing Resort Special Use Permit holders (commercial service supported by horses and mules). The Forest Service also proposes to issue an outfitter/guide permit for one current outfitter and guide (commercial service supported by burros) and an outfitter/guide permit for one new outfitter and guide (commercial service supported by llamas). The services as proposed would occur on the Inyo National Forest in the AA, JM, GT, and SS Wildernesses, and the non-wilderness portions of the Inyo National Forest. The proposed action authorizes the terms, conditions, and appropriate use levels for these activities. Specifically, the proposed action includes: (1) Pack station/outfitter guide-specific use authorizations in the AA and JM Wildernesses; (2) pack station/outfitter guide-specific authorizations in the GT and SS Wildernesses; (3) grazing/range readiness standards and approval and authorization of incidental grazing in the GT and SS Wildernesses and non-wilderness areas of the Inyo National Forest; (4) authorizations of pack station base facilities (including pastures and corrals) and boundaries; (5) location and authorization of front country (*i.e.*, non-wilderness) day rides and activities; and (6) restricting commercial pack stock travel to existing trails within identified Concentrated Recreation Areas. The Proposed Action also contains a number of actions specific for each of the twelve pack stations and two outfitter/guides analyzed in the Draft EIS. A more detailed description of the proposed action is available by contacting the project team leader.

Possible Alternatives

In addition to the Proposed Action, a No Action alternative, as required by NEPA will also be analyzed. The No Action alternative to be analyzed would allow for the natural expiration of current Pack Station special use permits with no new permits being issued.

Responsible Official

The responsible official is Jeffrey E. Bailey, Forest Supervisor, Inyo National Forest, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200, Bishop, CA 93514.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

Given the purpose and need, the deciding official reviews the proposed action, the other alternatives, and the environmental consequences in order to make the following decision: Whether to issue the permits with modified terms and conditions, or not to authorize the uses and require removal of all facilities from public land.

Scoping Process

Public participation is an important part of this analysis. The Forest Service is seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes, and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. Comments submitted during the scoping process should be in writing. They should be specific to the action being proposed and should describe as clearly and completely as possible any issues the commenter has with the proposal. This input will be used in preparation of the draft EIS.

To facilitate public participation, additional scoping opportunities will include a public scoping letter, meetings (dates and locations to be determined), newsletters, and information posted on the Inyo National Forest's Web sites.

Estimated Dates for the Draft and Final EIS

A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for public comment. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**. It is expected that the Draft EIS will be available for comment in February 2006.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review

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.

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)

Jeffrey E. Bailey,

Forest Supervisor, Inyo National Forest.

[FR Doc. 05–15695 Filed 8–8–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Commercial Pack Station and Pack Stock Outfitter/Guide Permit Issuance; Sierra National Forest; Fresno, Madera, and Mariposa Counties, CA

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) to document and disclose the environmental impacts of a proposal to re-issue long term permits for a variety of commercial pack stock related activities to seven existing

Resort Special Use Permit holders (commercial service supported by horse) and one existing Outfitter-Guide Special Use Permit Holder. The EIS will also designate a trail system and trail management objective for the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness. The services as proposed would occur on the Sierra National Forest in the Ansel Adams (AA), and John Muir (JM), and the non-wilderness portions of the Sierra National Forest. This EIS tiers to the Record of Decision that will be signed for the Trail and Commercial Pack Stock Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement for all activities and uses proposed in the AA and JM Wildernesses. Current activities provided by pack stations include full service guided trips (guide remains for the entire trip), dunnage trips (transport of material and supplies), spot trips (transport of people and supplies to a location and guide leaving), and day rides.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received no later than September 15, 2005. A draft environmental impact statement is expected to be published in February 2006, with public comment on the draft material requested for a period of 45 days. The final EIS is expected in August 2006.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Commercial Pack Station and Pack Stock Outfitter/Guide Permit Issuance, Sierra National Forest, 1600 Tollhouse Road, Clovis, CA 93611. Electronic comments may be sent to: *comments-pacificsouthwest-sierra@fs.fed.us.* Include ''Commercial Pack Station and Pack Stock Outfitter/Guide Permit Issuance'' in the subject line.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kim Sorini-Wilson, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Sierra National Forest, 29688 Auberry Road, Prather, CA 93651 (559) 855–5355 ext.3328.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

There is a need for action on permit applications from seven resort pack stations and one existing Outfitter-Guide Special Use Permit holder to re-issue their term permits for their existing facilities, activities and uses, on all portions of the Sierra National Forest, including the AA, JM, and non-wilderness areas of the Sierra National Forest. The seven resort pack stations are: Yosemite Trails Pack Station, Inc., Miller Meadow Inc dba Minarets Pack Stations, D&F Stables, LLC, High Sierra Pack Station, Clyde Pack Outfitters and Lost Valley Pack Station. Muir Trail Ranch is an outfitter-guide based off of private property within the John Muir Wilderness and Florence Lake Resort is a resort located on the east end of Florence Lake.

This project is also needed to respond to a Court Order issued in 2001. The Court Order required that the Forest Service reevaluate the existing management direction and impacts of commercial pack stock operations on the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses prior to issuing permits for these operations. The court also ordered that the cumulative effects analysis be completed by December 2005 followed by a second NEPA process to issue individual special use permits by December 2006. The first planning effort—the Trail and Commercial Pack Stock Management in the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses EIS—will analyze the management direction and cumulative impacts of these operations. This Commercial Pack Station and Pack Stock Outfitter/Guide Permit Issuance EIS will respond to the portion of the Court Order requiring the second level of NEPA analysis related to the re-issuance of commercial pack station permits.

The purposes of the project is to continue to provide commerical pack stock services as a part of a wide range of available recreational activities available on the Sierra National Forest and to provide these services in a manner consistent with existing forest plan direction. In addition, this EIS will also designate a trail system and trail management objective for the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness.

The Final EIS (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for this project will tier to the Trail and Commercial Pack Stock Management in the John Muir/Ansel Adams FEIS and ROD. The Trail and Commercial Pack Stock FEIS and ROD will identify the levels and terms of commercial pack stock use in the AA and JM Wilderness. This Permit Issuance EIS will authorize these uses in the AA and JM Wildernesses as well as authorize uses on other areas of the Sierra National Forest.

Proposed Action

To meet the purpose and need, the Forest Service proposes to re-issue long term permits for a variety of commercial pack stock related activities to seven existing Resort Special Use Permit holders (commercial service supported by horse) and one existing Outfitter-Guide Special Use Permit holder. The proposed action authorizes the terms, conditions, and appropriate use levels for these activities. Specifically, the proposed action includes: (1) Pack station/outfitter guide-specific use authorizations in the AA and JM Wildernesses; (2) authorizations of pack station base facilities (including pastures and corrals) and boundaries; (3) location and authorization of front country (*i.e.*, non-wilderness) day rides and activities; and (4) implementation of grazing/range readiness standards. The Proposed Action also contains a number of actions specific for each of the seven pack stations and one outfitter/guide analyzed in the Draft EIS. A more detailed description of the proposed action is available by contacting the project team leader.

Possible Alternatives

In addition to the Proposed Action, a No Action alternative, as required by NEPA will also be analyzed. The No Action alternative to be analyzed would allow for the natural expiration of current Pack Station special use permits with no new permits being issued.

Responsible Official

The responsible official is Edward C. Cole, Forest Supervisor, Sierra National Forest, 1600 Tollhouse Road, Clovis, CA 93611.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

Given the purpose and need, the deciding official reviews the proposed action, the other alternatives, and the environmental consequences in order to make the following decision: Whether to reissue the permits with modified terms and conditions, or not to authorize the uses and require removal of all facilities from public land.

Scoping Process

Public participation is an important part of this analysis. The Forest Service is seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes, and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. Comments submitted during the scoping process should be in writing. They should be specific to the action being proposed and should describe as clearly and completely as possible any issues the commenter has with the proposal. This input will be used in preparation of the draft EIS.

To facilitate public participation, additional scoping opportunities will include a public scoping letter, meetings (dates and locations to be determined), newsletters, and information posted on the Sierra National Forest's Web sites.

Estimated Dates for the Draft and Final EIS

A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for public comment. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review

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.

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)

Teresa A. Drivas,

Acting Forest Supervisor, Sierra National Forest.

[FR Doc. 05–15696 Filed 8–8–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of finding of no significant impact.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has made a finding of no significant impact in connection with a request from Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric) of Bismarck, North Dakota for assistance from RUS to finance the construction of a natural gas-fired combustion turbine and associated equipment near Groton in Brown County, South Dakota.

FOR FUTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Nurul Islam, Environmental Protection Specialist, Rural Utilities Service, Engineering and Environmental Staff, Stop 1571, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250–1571, telephone (202) 720–1414, fax (202) 720–0820, e-mail *nurul.islam@wdc.usda.gov*. Information is also available from Mr. James A. Berg, Environmental Monitoring Coordinator, Basin Electric, 1717 East Interstate Avenue, Bismarck, North Dakota 58501, telephone (701) 223–0441, Fax (701) 224–5336, e-mail address *jberg@bepc.com*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Basin Electric of Bismarck, North Dakota is proposing to construct a new 80–100 megawatt (MW) simple cycle gas turbine near Groton in Brown County, South Dakota. The primary purpose of the East Side Peaking Project (Project) is to meet the increasing power consumption requirements on the east side of Basin Electric's service territory. The proposed project would be located adjacent to an existing Basin Electric and Western Area Power Administration substation. The evaluated turbine offers the advantages of an aero-derivative gas turbine in achieving low emissions. The project would include a natural gas-fired combustion turbine and a modification to an existing substation will be required. In addition, approximately ½ mile of new transmission line will be constructed, and a new gas supply pipeline will be constructed to supply the natural gas. The South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources approved Basin Electric's request to construct the proposed project and issued an Air Quality Construction/Operation permit in May 2005. The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission also approved the proposed project in May 2005. The Project is required to help meet the growing needs for power of Basin Electric's membership in South Dakota. RUS may provide financial assistance to Basin Electric for this project.

Basin Electric applied to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Western Area Power Administration (Western) to interconnect the Project to Western's Groton Substation in Brown County, South Dakota. Western proposes to modify its substation to accommodate a new transmission line linking the peaking facility to the substation. RUS prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for the Project. The EA was distributed for public and agency review. Western was designated a cooperating agency for the EA by RUS. Western provided comments and the final EA was completed on June 20, 2005. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made a very general comment on the final EA. RUS did not receive any comments on the final EA from the public or from any other agencies. The EA, RUS believes, adequately addressed the potential environmental impacts of the Project. A number of environmental resource areas were analyzed including air quality, water quality, land use, floodplains, wetlands, cultural and historic properties, fish and wildlife resources, aesthetics, transportation, noise, human health and safety, and environmental justice. RUS, in accordance with its environmental policies and procedures, required that Basin Electric prepare an Environmental Report reflecting the potential impacts of the proposed facilities. The Environmental Analysis, which includes input from Federal, State, and local agencies, has been reviewed and accepted as RUS' EA for the project in accordance with 7 CFR 1794.41. Basin Electric published notices of the availability of the EA and solicited public comments per 7 CFR 1794.42. The 30-day comment period on the EA for the proposed project ended June 5, 2005.