comments should be received by March 3, 2006. If comments were submitted during the July 2003 scoping period, they are being considered and it is not necessary to re-submit the same comments.

The Interdisciplinary Team will review comments received during the scoping period to determine which comments are significant and within the scope of this project. The team will then develop issues and a range of alternatives to address the significant issues, including the ''No Action'' alternative, in which no additional timber harvest or road constructyion is proposed. Other alternatives will consider various levels and locations of timber harvest in response to issues and non-timber objectives. The team will then prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that will display the alternatives and the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of each alternative. The Draft EIS is projected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in April 2006. The Final EIS is anticipated by September 2006. Subsistence hearings, as provided for in Title VIII, section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), will be conducted, if necessary, during the comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

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 publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

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 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, 533, (1978). Environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon* v. *Hodel*, 803 F.2nd 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 of the proposed action, comments during scoping and 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. In addition to commenting on the proposed action and the DEIS when it is released, agencies and other interested persons or groups are invited to write to or speak with Forest Service officials at any time during the planning process.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and 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. Requesters 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, and 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 7 days.

Permits or Licenses Required: Permits required for implementation include the following:

1. U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

—Approvals of discharge of dredged or fill material into the waters of the United States under section 404 of the Clean Water Act;

—Approval of the construction of structures or work in navigable waters of the United States under section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899;

2. Environmental Protection Agency.

—National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (402) Permit;

—Review Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan;

3. State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources.

—Tideland Permit and Lease or Easement;

4. State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation.

—Solid Waste Disposal Permit;

—Certification of Compliance with Alaska Water Quality Standards (401 Certification)

Responsible Official: Forrest Cole, Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest, Federal Building, 648 Mission Street, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901, is the responsible official.

Nature of Decision To Be Made: The Forest Supervisor will consider the comments, responses, disclosure of environmental consequences, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making the decision. The responsible official will decide whether or not to harvest timber from this area, and if so, how this timber would be harvested. The responsible official will state the decision and the rationale for the decision in the Record of Decision (ROD). (Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21)

Dated: January 27, 2006.

Forrest Cole,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 06–1001 Filed 2–2–06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Helicopter Use in Wilderness; Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Helicopter Use in Wilderness. The Alaska Region and Pacific Northwest (PNW) Research Station are proposing to inventory 913 plots in wilderness areas over a 10-year span, with about

540 plots accessed by helicopter and 373 plots accessed by day hiking. Inventory protocol includes completing 10 percent of the plots each year. This means that approximately 91 plots will be inventoried each year. Of these 91 plots, about 54 plots will be accessed by helicopter. Each inventory plot accessed by helicopter will require two landings. In any given year, these 54 plots will spread out across 7.8 million acres in 19 wilderness areas on the Tongass National Forest and one wilderness study area on the Chugach National Forest.

DATES: To be most useful, comments should be received within 30 days of this notice. A draft EIS is planned to be available for comment in April 2006, with a final EIS anticipated by September 2006.

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be sent to the USDA Forest Service, Alaska Regional Office, Ecosystem Planning Staff, ATTN: Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Helicopters in Wilderness EIS, P.O. Box 21628, Juneau, AK 99802–1628. Comments may also be sent via facsimile to (907) 586–7852 or via E-mail to: *Comments-alaska-regional-office@fs.fed.us*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ken Post, IDT Leader, Alaska Regional Office, Ecosystem Planning Staff, (907) 586–8796.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The proposed project encompasses 19 wilderness areas on the Tongass National Forest and the Nellie Juan—College Fiord wilderness study area (WSA) on the Chugach National Forest. The Chugach National Forest Plan states that the WSA is to be managed to maintain and protect the existing (1984) wilderness character. A Minimum Requirement Decision Guide (MRDG) was completed in 2005. Based on the analysis in the MRDG, the Regional Forester determined that helicopters were the minimum tool needed to accomplish the inventory on some of the plots.

Public Participation

Public participation has been an integral component of the study process and will continue to be especially important at several points during the analysis. The Forest Service has already begun a consultation process with Tribal Governments and will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies, individuals and organizations who may be interested in, or affected by, the proposed activities. Issues identified so far for analysis in the EIS include: The use and noise from helicopters accessing plots could compromise the area's wilderness character and visitor experience; the noise from helicopters accessing plots could impact wildlife; accessing all the sites on foot would expose the employees to potential injury while traveling in the steep, wet terrain with heavy packs.

Based on results of scoping to date, six alternatives have been identified that range from no helicopter access to helicopter access for all the inventory plots. All comments received are being considered in the analysis including comments received prior to this notice. No formal meetings are planned at this time.

The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date of the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**.

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). Environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon* v. *Hodel*, 803 F.2nd 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 of 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 environmental impact 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 in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and 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. Requesters 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, and 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 seven days.

Responsible Official: Dennis E. Bschor, Regional Forester, Alaska Region, Juneau, Alaska, is the responsible official.

Dated: January 27, 2006.

Beth Giron Pendleton,

Acting Regional Forester.

[FR Doc. 06–1002 Filed 2–2–06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Lake Tahoe Basin Federal Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Lake Tahoe Basin Federal Advisory Committee will hold a meeting on March 2, 2006, at the U.S. Forest Service Office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150. This Committee, established by the Secretary of Agriculture on December 15, 1998 (64 FR 2876), is chartered to provide advice to the Secretary on implementing the terms of the Federal Interagency Partnership on the Lake Tahoe Region and other matters raised by the Secretary.