

## Scope of Issues

Extensive prior public involvement has resulted in the following key issues to be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement: 1. Impacts of grazing on soil and water, 2. Impacts of grazing on vegetation, including riparian areas and wildflowers, 3. Impacts of grazing on recreational experiences, including grazing in a Wilderness, and hiker interactions with guard dogs, 4. Impacts of grazing on wildlife, including habitat damage and potential disease transmission, 5. Impacts of grazing on socio-economics of the local communities, and 6. Impacts of grazing on cultural resources.

## Scoping Process

Written comments that were submitted during scoping and comment periods for the development of the preceding Environmental Assessment will still be considered and are still part of the project record. The Forest Service requests that you do not resubmit the same comments. Because of extensive public input during the Environmental Assessment process, the scope of issues and alternatives to be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement have already been well examined and the Forest Service is considering this prior public input as meeting the primary requirement for scoping for the Environmental Impact Statement.

This notice of intent initiates a supplementary scoping process, which is intended to provide the opportunity for the public to comment on the scope of issues and alternatives to be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement only if there is new or different information that has not been previously considered. To determine whether your comment or concern has previously been submitted, please read the Scoping Summary and Response to Comments documents found on the project Web page at [www.fs.usda.gov/projects/sanjuan/landmanagement/projects](http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/sanjuan/landmanagement/projects), or call Jared Whitmer.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such manner that they are useful to the agency's preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns.

Information regarding this project is available at the Columbine Ranger District office in Bayfield, Colorado, and on the San Juan National Forest Web site noted above. Public meetings may be scheduled at a later date to provide further information as needed. The

dates of any public meetings will be announced by press releases in local papers, direct mailings, emails, and will be posted on the San Juan National Forest Web site.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

Dated: February 3, 2015.

**Kara L. Chadwick,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

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**BILLING CODE 3410-11-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### **Lewis and Clark National Forest, Montana, Castle Mountains Restoration Project**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

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

**SUMMARY:** The Lewis and Clark National Forest (LCNF) is going to prepare an environmental impact statement for vegetation management actions in the Castle Mountains located in Central Montana. The project is designed to meet the desired condition of restoring forest and grasslands ecosystems to promote landscape resiliency over time for multiple resource values while minimizing the threat of high intensity wildfire within the Willow Creek municipal watershed and areas of other valued resources and infrastructure in the 69,610 acre Castle Mountains landscape.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by March 23, 2015. The draft environmental impact statement is expected September 2015 and the final environmental impact statement is expected March 2016.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to Carol Hatfield White Sulphur Springs District Ranger, Lewis & Clark National Forest, 204 W. Folsom, P.O. Box A, White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645. Comments may also be sent via email to [comments-northern-lewisclark-white-sulphur-sprgs@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-lewisclark-white-sulphur-sprgs@fs.fed.us), or via facsimile to 406-547-6023.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in

such a way that they are useful to the Agency's preparation of the EIS. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered, however.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** John Casselli Project Team Lead, at 406-791-7723. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

### Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the project is to move toward a resilient forest and grassland ecosystem that will mimic a more historic natural fire regime to reduce the future threat of high intensity wildfire and the associated hazards to life, valued resources and infrastructure. In order to achieve this, there is a need to create a mosaic of vegetation and fuel structure more resilient to disturbance over time that includes improving the overall diversity in age classes, species, and meadow openings across the landscape. The action will provide for safer, more effective fire suppression actions when needed, reduce threats to forest users, to private residences, power corridors, agency infrastructure, water quality of Willow Creek and to valued wildlife habitat. These actions will reduce the probability of post-wildfire watershed impacts to the Willow Creek municipal watershed and associated costs.

### Proposed Action

Approximately 22,124 acres are proposed for treatment which includes a combination of fuels reduction thinning, commercial harvest of trees, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed fire. Mechanical and/or hand treatment methods would be used to accomplish the treatment objectives. Proposed treatment activities include: roughly 1,911 acres of Improvement Thinning; 7,329 acres of Prescribed Fire; 313 acres of Aspen Restoration; 277 acres of Precommercial Thinning; 856 acres of White Bark Pine Restoration; 8,681 acres of meadow Restoration; 1,519 acres of Douglas-fir Thinning; and 1,236 acres of Lodgepole Pine

regeneration harvest. There would be up to 57 miles of temporary road utilized for the project with approximately 20 miles of this occurring over existing road prisms. Road maintenance or reconstruction of existing system roads to meet forestry best management practices would be necessary to implement the proposed action. No new permanent roads will be constructed. Temporary roads not on the forest road system that are utilized will be obliterated (stabilized and or restored to natural contours) upon completion of treatment operations. Roads identified in the 2007 Travel Management Record of Decision that were removed from the road system (decommissioned) would be physically stabilized or re-contoured as needed to meet the resource objectives of travel management. Site-specific amendments to the Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan standards pertaining to elk hiding cover, elk winter range, and elk thermal cover may be necessary in order to meet the project's purpose and need. To address potential impacts of proposed management activities on cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) in meeting the project objectives, the proposal includes an integrated management approach to control the establishment and spread of this invasive grass species. The use of applicable EPA approved selective herbicides and or biological controls would be utilized in units having prescribed burning as the treatment action. Approximately 42 percent (29,498 acres) of the total project area is located within the Castles Mountains Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA). Proposed treatment activities on approximately 6,262 acres are planned within the IRA. A combination of non-commercial vegetation treatments and prescribed fire techniques are proposed. Under the proposal, road maintenance may occur but no road construction, reconstruction of system or temporary roads are planned within the IRA. The location of this project area is those sections of the Castle Mountains within the National Forest Boundary; Township 8 and 9 N, Range 8, 9 and 10 E. Principle Meridian, Meagher County, Montana.

#### Responsible Official

Helena and Lewis & Clark National Forests Forest Supervisor.

#### Nature of Decision To Be Made

The decisions to be made include: Whether to implement the proposed action or an alternative to the proposed action, what monitoring requirements would be appropriate to evaluate the implementation of this project, the

timing of the project and whether a forest plan site specific amendment (exemption) would be necessary as a result of the decision for this project.

#### Scoping Process

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process, which guides the development of the environmental impact statement. In February 2015, a scoping notice (flyer) will be mailed to interested and affected parties directing them to the project's information which will be posted to the Lewis and Clark National Forest's projects Web page (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/lcnf/>). The Web page will contain detailed project information, including when public meetings will be scheduled, project proposal maps, and other pertinent project information.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such manner that they are useful to the agency's preparation of the environmental impact statement. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions. The submission of timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in the administrative objection process or any judicial review.

Dated: February 11, 2015.

**Robin Strathy,**

*Deputy Forest Supervisor.*

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**BILLING CODE 3410-15-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Rural Utilities Service

#### Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

**AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended), the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by April 20, 2015.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Thomas P. Dickson, Acting Director & Funds Control Officer, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, USDA Rural Development, 1400 Independence Ave. SW., STOP 1522,

Room 5164 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-4492. FAX: (202) 720-8435. Email: [Thomas.Dickson@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Thomas.Dickson@wdc.usda.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulation (5 CFR part 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see 5 CFR 1320.8(d)). This notice identifies an information collection that RUS is submitting to OMB for extension.

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. Comments may be sent to: Thomas P. Dickson, Acting Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave. SW., STOP 1522, Room 5164 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-4492, FAX: (202) 720-8435. Email: [Thomas.Dickson@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Thomas.Dickson@wdc.usda.gov).

**Title:** Substantially Underserved Trust Areas.

**OMB Control Number:** 0572-0147.

**Type of Request:** Revision of a currently approved information collection.

**Abstract:** The RUS provides loan, loan guarantee and grant programs for rural electric, water and waste, and telecommunications and broadband infrastructure. The SUTA initiative gives the Secretary of Agriculture certain discretionary authorities relating to financial assistance terms and conditions that can enhance the financing possibilities in areas that are underserved by certain RUS electric, water and waste, and telecommunications and broadband programs. The data covered by this