

**Closing Date for Applications**

Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Savings Time, April 20, 1998 at the following address:

Hand Delivery (including FedEx, DHL, etc.): U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Marketing Operations Staff, Room 4932-S, 14th and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-1042  
U.S. Postal Delivery: Marketing Operations Staff, STOP 1042, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-1042

Electronic mail:

mosadmin@fas.usda.gov

Facsimile: (202) 720-9361

**Lon Hatamiya,**

*Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service.*

[FR Doc. 98-3873 Filed 2-13-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-10-M

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE****Forest Service****South Manti Timber Salvage; Manti-La Sal National Forest, Sanpete and Sevier Counties, Utah**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, Interior.

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

**SUMMARY:** The Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to document the analysis and disclose the environmental impacts of proposed actions to salvage harvest dead and dying timber, build roads, and restock some stands of trees in portions of the Muddy Creek, Twelvemile Creek, Sixmile Creek, and Ferron Creek Drainages. The project is located approximately 10 air miles southeast of Manti, Utah. This analysis is expected to coincide with Forest Service development of the interim rule "Administration of the Forest Development Transportation System: Temporary Suspension of Road Construction in Roadless Areas" (**Federal Register**, Vol. 63, No. 18, p. 4350-4351) and will consider effects on roadless and undeveloped character of areas involved and will comply with all policy in effect at the time of decision.

The need for the proposal is to: reduce the potential for large and intense wildfire across forested areas (with associated environmental effects), facilitate rapid reestablishment of Engelmann spruce through replanting of spruce in Timber Management Emphasis Units identified in the Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Plan, and recover some of the economic value of the dead and dying

trees. The proposed action involves harvest of up to approximately 31 million board feet (MMBF) of dead and dying Engelmann spruce from approximately 6,600 acres within an analysis area of approximately 25,000 acres. Harvest with both ground based and aerial (helicopter) methods would be used. Within the analysis area, approximately 10 miles of new road would be constructed, 20 miles of existing road reconstructed, and 23 miles of existing road would be used with appropriate maintenance to complete this harvest. Approximately 8 miles of road used for harvest operations would be closed and reclaimed following harvest.

The analysis area includes approximately 10,000 acres of Engelmann spruce-Subalpine fir vegetation type. A spruce bark beetle epidemic has moved through the area infesting spruce trees. As a consequence, most spruce trees over eight inches in diameter are dead or dying within the analysis area. In response to this epidemic mortality, approximately 25 MMBF of Engelmann spruce have previously been sold from approximately 2,450 acres within the analysis area.

Five areas that were identified as roadless during the RARE II inventory process are adjacent to and partly within the analysis area. The proposal does not include construction or reconstruction of any permanent or temporary roads within the RARE II areas. The proposed action includes harvest of approximately 7 MMBF Engelmann spruce using ground based and helicopter methods from three of these roadless areas.

**DATES:** Written comments concerning the scope of the analysis described in this Notice should be received on or before March 19, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to Manti-La Sal National Forest, 599 West Price River Drive, Price, Utah 84501.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:** Questions concerning the proposed action and EIS should be addressed to Don Fullmer, Ecosystems Staff, Manti-La Sal National Forest, phone (435) 637-2817.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This EIS will tier to the final EIS for the Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The Manti-La Sal Forest Plan provides the overall guidance (Goals, Objectives, Standards, and Management Area Direction) to achieve the Desired Future Condition for the area being analyzed, and contains specific management area prescriptions for the entire Forest. An Environmental

Assessment (EA) was prepared in 1996 for spruce timber sales in this analysis area. Six sales were offered and awarded in 1996 based on the analysis contained in the EA. In 1997 a decision was made to sell an additional 22 MMBF of dead, dying and at risk Engelmann spruce within the analysis area. That decision was not implemented. As a result of concerns raised and changes in condition (additional spruce mortality) which occurred after the EA was prepared, the decision was made to prepare an EIS for the project.

Scoping and issue development identified the following issues: land stability; soil erosion and productivity; air quality; water quality and quantity; riparian/wetlands; aquatic habitat; threatened, endangered and sensitive aquatic species; Forest health, diversity and productivity; rangeland vegetation; noxious weeds; threatened, endangered and sensitive terrestrial plant species; fuel loading and fire risk; transportation system, visitor safety, access and travel delays; range allotments and improvements; visual landscape; roadless character; cultural resources; economics; and energy.

The Forest Service is seeking information and comments from Federal, State, and local agencies as well as individuals and organizations who may be interested in, or affected by the proposed action. The Forest Service invites written comments and suggestions on the issues related to the proposal and the area being analyzed. Information received will be used in preparation of the Draft EIS and Final EIS. For most effective use, comments should be submitted to the Forest Service within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. Preparation of the EIS will include the following steps:

1. Define the purpose of and need for action.
2. Identify potential issues.
3. Eliminate issues of minor importance or those that were covered by previous, relevant environmental analysis.
4. Select issues to be analyzed in depth.
5. Identify reasonable alternatives to the proposed action.
6. Describe the affected environment.
7. Identify the potential environmental effects of the alternatives.

Steps 2, 3, and 4 will be completed through the scoping process.

Step 5 will consider a range of alternatives developed from the key issues. One of these will be the "No Action" alternative. Other alternatives

will consider various levels and locations of harvest, regeneration, and related road development/improvement in response to the purpose and need, issues, and other resource objectives.

Step 6 will describe the physical attributes of the area to be affected by this proposal, with special attention to the environmental factors that could be adversely affected.

Step 7 will analyze the environmental effects of each alternative. This analysis will be consistent with management direction outlined in the Forest Plan. The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of each alternative will be analyzed and documented. In addition, the site specific mitigation measures for each alternative will be identified and the effectiveness of these mitigation measures will be disclosed.

The approximate boundary of the area covered for this analysis will be from the southern Forest boundary along White Mountain north along Skyline Drive to the Ferron and Sixmile drainages.

The proposed management activities would be administered by the Sanpete and Ferron/Price Ranger Districts of the Manti-La Sal National Forest in Sanpete and Sevier Counties, Utah.

Agency representatives and other interested people are invited to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the EIS process. Two specific time periods are identified for the receipt of formal comments on the analysis. The two comment periods are, (1) during the scoping process, the next 30 days following publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, and (2) during the formal review period of the Draft EIS.

The Draft EIS is estimated to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and available for public review in May, 1998. At this time the EPA will publish an availability notice of the Draft EIS in the **Federal Register**.

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 at this early stage 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 reviewers' position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. versus 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 versus Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Circuit, 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. versus 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, 40 CFR 1503.3, in addressing these points.)

The final EIS is expected to be released August 1998.

The Forest Supervisor for the Manti-La Sal National Forest, who is the responsible official for the EIS, will then make a decision regarding this proposal, after considering the comments, responses, and environmental consequences discussed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The reasons for the decision will be documented in a Record of Decision.

Dated: February 6, 1998.

**Janette S. Kaiser,**

*Forest Supervisor, Manti-La Sal National Forest.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

#### PBA-12a Barataria Bay Waterway West Bank Protection Project, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana

**AGENCY:** Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of finding of no significant impact.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; the Council on Environmental Quality Guidelines (40 CFR Part 1500); and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Guidelines (7 CFR Part 650); the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, gives notice that an environmental impact statement is not being prepared for the Barataria Bay Waterway West Bank Protection Project, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Donald W. Gohmert, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 3737 Government Street, Alexandria, Louisiana 71302; telephone (318) 473-7751.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The environmental assessment of the federally assisted action indicates that the project will not cause significant local, regional, or national impacts on the environment. As a result of these findings, Donald W. Gohmert, State Conservationist, has determined that preparation and review of an environmental impact statement is not needed for this project.

The project will evaluate potential impacts attributed to bank protection measures along the west bank of Barataria Bay Waterway. The project area encompasses approximately 2,200 acres of brackish marsh and open water habitat. Project features include the construction of approximately 9,400 linear feet of rock bankline protection and the installation of a set of two water control structures.

The Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been forwarded to the Environmental Protection Agency and to various federal, state, and local agencies and interested parties. A limited number of copies of the FONSI are available to fill single copy requests at the above address. Basic data collected during the environmental assessment are on file and may be reviewed by contacting Donald W. Gohmert.

No administrative action on implementation of the proposal will be