

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service****Information Collection; Request for Comments; Urban Connections**

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Forest Service announces its intent to establish a new information collection. The collected information will help Forest Service personnel better understand the demands that urban residents make on agency programs and services, how well the agency meets these demands, and if the agency effectively communicates its programs and services to urban residents. Information will be collected from people living in and around Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; Detroit, Michigan; and Cleveland, Ohio.

DATES: Comments must be received in writing on or before June 21, 1999.

ADDRESSES: All comments should be addressed to LindaLou Stockinger, Public Affairs, Forest Service, USDA, 310 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203 or email to lstockin/r9@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: LindaLou Stockinger, Public Affairs, at (414) 297-3326.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

Urban residents are increasingly looking to the National Forests as a source of recreation and relaxation and to gain some relief from dense urban settings. Many eastern National Forests are situated within a few hours drive from dense urban environments. For example, the Chippewa and Superior National forests are within a few hours drive of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. The Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha, and Ottawa National Forests are within driving distance of Detroit, Michigan. The White Mountain National Forest, located in New Hampshire, is within commuting distance of Boston, Massachusetts. Two National Forests, the Wayne in Ohio and the Allegheny in Pennsylvania, are within a few hours drive of Cleveland, Ohio. As a result, National Forest System lands are under increased pressure from urban residents to meet their need for relief from dense urban environments.

Because of the increased demands on these natural resources, the agency is collecting information to identify the

concerns that urban residents have regarding the agency's ability to meet these additional demands.

The Forest Service has contracted with a private public affairs firm, Kearns & West, to collect this information. Personnel from Kearns & West will collect information in four phases that will include telephone interviews and focus groups. Forest Service personnel will work with Kearns & West personnel to evaluate and analyze the results.

The results of the study will help Forest Service personnel better understand the demands that urban residents make on the agency's programs and services, how well the agency communicates its programs and services to these residents, how well the agency meets needs and expectations of urban residents, how opportunities might be made available to involve urban residents in discussions about land management issues, and how to interest urban residents in participating in volunteer activities on National Forest System lands.

Data from this information collection is not available from other sources.

Description of Information Collection

Title: Urban Connections—Phase I—Telephone Surveys.

OMB Number: New.

Expiration Date of Approval: New.

Type of Request: This is a new information collection that has not received approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

Abstract: The purpose of the information collected in Phase I is to gain feedback on the types of questions that will be asked in Phase II. Kearns & West personnel will interview 12 urban residents: 3 in Boston, Massachusetts; 3 in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; 3 in Detroit, Michigan; and 3 in Cleveland, Ohio. Each participant will be asked questions that include how important they think the health of forest lands are to future generations; their perceptions of how and why National Forest System lands are managed as they are; their knowledge of Forest Service programs; their thoughts about economically based enterprises on National Forest System lands, such as concessionaires; their view of the Forest Service Natural Resource Agenda that includes improving water quality, recreational experiences, wildlife habitat, and land stewardship; their perceptions of Forest Service customer service; and if they would be willing to volunteer time to help the agency with activities, such as trail maintenance. Respondents also will be asked if there are other questions they think should be included on the

survey and if they know of anyone who might be a potential survey participant.

Estimate of Burden: 15 minutes.

Type of Respondents: Residents living in or around the cities of Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; Detroit, Michigan; and Cleveland, Ohio.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 12.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 3 hours.

Description of Information Collection

Title: Urban Connections—Phase II—Telephone Survey.

OMB Number: New.

Expiration Date of Approval: New.

Type of Request: This is a new information collection that has not received approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

Abstract: Data from Phase I is the basis for the questionnaire used in Phase II. Kearns & West will interview 1000 people in each of the following metropolitan areas: Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; Detroit, Michigan; and Cleveland, Ohio.

Respondents will be asked questions that include how important they think the health of forest lands are to future generations; their perceptions of how and why National Forest System lands are managed as they are; their knowledge of Forest Service programs; their thoughts about economically based enterprises on National Forest System lands, such as concessionaires; their view of the Forest Service Natural Resource Agenda that includes improving water quality, recreational experiences, wildlife habitat, and land stewardship; their perceptions of Forest Service customer service; and if they would be willing to volunteer time to help the agency with activities, such as trail maintenance. Respondents also will be asked if there are other questions they think should be included on the survey and if they know of anyone who might be a potential survey participant.

Respondents also will be asked if they are, or if they know of anyone who might be, willing to participate in a future focus group.

Data from Phase II will help Forest Service personnel understand how urban residents perceive the agency's management of National Forest System lands.

Estimate of Burden: 20 minutes.

Type of Respondents: Residents living in or around the cities of Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; Detroit, Michigan, and Cleveland, Ohio.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 4000.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 1334 hours.

Description of Information Collection

Title: Urban Connections—Phase III—Focus Groups.

OMB Number: New.

Expiration Date of Approval: New.

Type of Request: This is a new information collection that has not received approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

Abstract: The information collected during Phases I and II of this information collection will form the basis for Phase III. Kearns & West will conduct a total of 8 focus groups: 2 in Boston, Massachusetts; 2 in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; 2 in Detroit, Michigan; and 2 in Cleveland, Ohio. The purpose of the focus groups is to discuss responses to questions asked in Phases I and II and help Forest Service personnel understand perceptions urban residents have concerning the agency's management of National Forest System lands.

Estimate of Burden: 2 hours.

Type of Respondents: Residents living in or around the cities of Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; Detroit, Michigan; and Cleveland, Ohio who either participated in a telephone interview in Phases I or II or whose name was suggested by one of the telephone interviewees as someone who might be interested in participating in a focus group.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 96.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 192 hours.

Description of Information Collection

Title: Urban Connections—Phase IV—Telephone Surveys.

OMB Number: New.

Expiration Date of Approval: New.

Type of Request: This is a new information collection that has not received approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

Abstract: The information collected during Phases I, II and III will serve as the basis for Phase IV. Kearns and West personnel will interview 10 people in each of the metropolitan areas of Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; Detroit, Michigan; and Cleveland, Ohio.

These respondents will be selected from those who were interviewed previously during Phase I or II of this

information collection process, or will be people who were identified as potential participants by one of the earlier telephone survey respondents.

The purpose of Phase IV is to gain additional information to those questions that were included in Phases I and II. The collected information will help the Forest Service understand what urban residents expect from public lands in order for the agency to meet these expectations.

Estimate of Burden: 30 minutes.

Type of Respondents: Residents living in or around the cities of Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; Detroit, Michigan; and Cleveland, Ohio.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 40.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 20 hours.

Comment Is Invited

The agency invites comments on the following: (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 respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Use of Comment

All comments, including name and address when provided, will become a matter of public record. Comments received in response to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval.

Dated: April 15, 1999.

Robert Lewis, Jr.,

Acting Associate Chief.

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BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Revision of the Notice of Intent for the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Statement. The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Regions 4 and 5 announce the adjustment to the schedule for the development of new management direction in Sierra Nevada national forest, supported by an environmental impact statement. Previous schedules published in the **Federal Register** on July 10, 1998 and November 20, 1998 announced a completion date of July 31, 1999.

SUMMARY: The previous **Federal Register** notice of November 20, 1998 called for publication of the draft environmental impact statement in late February, 1999. The schedule is being adjusted to allow the Forest Service more time to integrate relevant natural resource science findings and to better integrate public concerns into alternatives to be displayed in the draft environmental impact statement. The adjustment in schedule will result in a more meaningful and useful draft environmental impact statement for public review and comment. The adjustment in schedule changes the estimated publication of the draft environmental impact statement to late spring or early summer of 1999. The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will amend national forest plans for the Humboldt-Toiyabe, Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, Sierra, Sequoia, and Inyou National Forests, and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. The EIS will address five problem areas described in the Notice of Intent published in the November 20, 1998 **Federal Register**: old forest ecosystems; aquatic, riparian, and meadow ecosystems; fire and fuels; noxious weeds; and, lower westside hardwood forest ecosystems.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Please see the USDA Forest Service Region 5 World Wide Web site www.r5.fs.fed.us or contact Dr. Kent Connaughton, USDA Forest Service, Sierra Nevada Framework Project, Room 419, 801 "I" Street, Sacramento, CA 95814; phone number 916-492-7554; TTY via PacBell relay (800) 735-2929.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region and the Pacific Southwest Research Station are integrating new science into management of the national forests of California. The effort is called the Sierra Nevada Framework Project. One objective of the Framework Project is to amend forest plans in conformance with the National Forest Management Act