

In conclusion, there has been no manipulation of the data presented at the public hearing in Washington on 3 February. Implementation of the trial will proceed precisely as explained at that public hearing should the United States grant equivalence to our proposal.

In subsequent communications, AQIS further clarified MHA random sampling as the "recommended" procedure but acknowledged that "random" often means "unpredictable" rather than statistically random. It emphasized that MHA sampling is conducted by quality control personnel, and that production personnel have no prior knowledge or influence over when or how sampling occurs.

AQIS also clarified two additional issues. One is the U.S. reinspection record of the Rockdale establishment. It stated that during the period from April 1998 to March 1999, Rockdale exported 91 lots to the United States. Eighteen of these lots were identified for further reinspection while seventy-three were checked only for container integrity and labeling. As noted earlier in this notice, AQIS reports that Rockdale had no product rejected for contamination or pathology for the last 12 months.

The second additional issue concerns Australian exports to the European Union. AQIS reported that no interruptions of trade have occurred as a result of its disagreement with the EU over the March 1998 audit results. For example, AQIS reported that from January 1999 through April 1999, Australian establishments have shipped to EU countries 4,220 tonnes of beef, 7,608 tonnes of sheep and lamb, 1,177 tonnes of horse meat, and 51 tonnes of goat meat.

FSIS notes that AQIS has consistently provided immediate, comprehensive and credible responses to all questions that FSIS has raised about MSEP and to issues raised in public comments.

Finding of Equivalence

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (commonly referred to as the "SPS Agreement") obliges the United States to respond to requests by other contracting parties to establish the equivalence of specified meat and poultry processing measures with those of the United States.

The Australian Government formally requested that the United States make an equivalence determination regarding its Meat Safety Enhancement Program to pilot-test a revised slaughter inspection system. FSIS has reviewed the MSEP with particular emphasis on two criteria:

(1) Does the MSEP meet all USDA requirements for the import of meat and meat products to the United States?

(2) Does the MSEP afford American consumers the same level of public health protection provided by USDA domestic slaughter inspection?

In summary, FSIS finds that the MSEP meets these criteria because MSEP will provide direct Federal oversight of Australian export establishment slaughter operations and verification that all U.S. safety and wholesomeness requirements have been met. FSIS further finds that AQIS has satisfactorily addressed the comments and concerns raised in the February 3, 1999 public meeting, the written comments presented in response to the **Federal Register** notice of January 15, 1999, and all subsequent comments.

Consequently, FSIS has determined that the AQIS MSEP program (1) meets all USDA requirements for import of meat and meat products to the United States, (2) will afford American consumers the same level of public health protection provided by USDA domestic slaughter inspection, and (3) is therefore equivalent. Accordingly, AQIS-certified establishments that participate in the MSEP field trials may ship meat and meat products to the United States.

AQIS has advised FSIS that it will soon begin MSEP implementation testing in one beef slaughter establishment and will initiate baseline data collections in others as they qualify. AQIS has pledged to share its baseline data with FSIS before the second and any subsequent establishment begins implementation testing. FSIS will provide periodic MSEP progress summaries through the *Constituent Alert*.

FSIS will review this equivalence determination when AQIS completes its MSEP field trials and prepares a report for FSIS review. FSIS will announce the results of that review in the **Federal Register**. FSIS will monitor MSEP field trials in the interim through discussions with AQIS personnel, review of establishment baseline and implementation data, periodic on-site audits, and continuous port of entry reinspection of products shipped to the United States. A copy of the FSIS monitoring plan may be obtained from Mr. Mark Manis at the address shown in **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** at the beginning of this notice.

Done at Washington, DC, on June 1, 1999.
Thomas Billy,
Administrator.
 [FR Doc. 99-14253 Filed 6-4-99; 8:45 am]
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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

Little Boulder Harvest and Fire Restoration Project; Butte and Jefferson Ranger Districts; Little Boulder Harvest and Fire Restoration Project; Butte Field Office; Jefferson County, MT

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA and Bureau of Land Management, USDI.

ACTION: Notice; intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental impacts of a proposed action to manipulate forest and range vegetation on about 12,950 acres. The manipulation includes timber harvest and prescribed burning. The Forest Service will be lead agency for this EIS (40 CFR 1501.5). The purpose is to restore and maintain aspen, open Douglas-fir forests, and shrub/grass cover. The proposed action includes approximately 58 acres of regeneration harvest, 4,815 acres of commercial tree thinning (some followed by burning and some not), 7,303 acres of prescribed burning without timber harvest, and 775 acres of conifer removal around aspen clones.

DATES: Initial comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing no later than July 9, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Mike Paterni, Acting Forest Supervisor, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, 1820 Meadowlark, Butte, MT 59701.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lee Harry, Environmental Analysis Team Leader, Butte Ranger District, 1820 Meadowlark, Butte, MT 59701, or phone: (406) 494-2147.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Forest Service and BLM goals are to restore aspen, open-grown Douglas-fir forests, and shrub/grass vegetation. Prescribed burning would be applied on a total of 10,173 acres, both as a single treatment (7,303 acres), and following timber harvest (2,870 acres). Of the total of 4,870 acres of harvest, 2,000 acres of harvest would not be followed by underburning. Commercial thinning in lodgepole, Douglas-fir and around aspen clones would be the primary harvest technique. A small part of the harvest would be for regeneration of lodgepole pine, and one proposed unit of

regeneration harvest would exceed 40 acres.

The analysis area lies between Butte, Boulder, and Whitehall, Montana. It includes several tributaries to Boulder River. Some included tributaries are: Bison Creek; Kleinsmith Gulch; Galena Gulch; Little Galena Gulch; North Fork Little Boulder River; and Little Boulder Creek. (T4N,R5W; T5N,R4W; T5N,R5W; T5N,R6W; T6N,R4W; T6N,R5W; T6N,R6W). The project area encompasses approximately 69,000 acres.

Potential issues identified are the effects of the proposal on watershed function, visual quality, fish and wildlife, noxious weeds, and roadless character.

Public participation is important to the analysis. Part of the goal of public involvement is to identify additional issues and to refine the general, tentative issues identified above. People may visit with Forest Service and BLM officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. Two periods are specifically designated for comments on the analysis: (1) During the scoping process and (2) during the draft EIS comment period.

During the scoping process, the Forest Service and BLM are seeking information and comments from Federal, State, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. The agencies invite written comments and suggestions on this action, particularly in terms of identification of issues and alternative development.

Analysis of this proposed action began in an environmental assessment (EA). Public involvement for the EA started in October 1998 with a scoping letter to interested parties and legal notice in the Montana Standard. Since then, the public has participated in formulating issues and developing alternatives through responding to large mailings and attending periodic public meetings and field trips.

The Forest Service and BLM will continue to jointly involve the public and will inform interested and affected parties as to how they may participate and contribute to the final decision. Another formal opportunity for response will be provided following completion of a draft EIS.

The draft EIS should be available for the review in December, 1999. The final EIS is scheduled for completion in March, 1999.

The comment period on the draft EIS will be 60 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in

the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 60-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 and BLM 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.

The Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Supervisor and the Butte Field Manager are the responsible officials who will make the decision. They will decide on this proposal after considering comments and responses, environmental consequences discussed in the Final EIS, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The decision and reasons for the decision will be documented in a Record of Decision.

Dated: June 1, 1999.

Mike Paterni,

Acting Forest Supervisor, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

Dated: June 1, 1999.

Merle Good,

Field Manager, BLM Butte Field Office.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Bureau of Export Administration

President's Export Council Subcommittee on Export Administration; Notice of Partially Closed Meeting

A partially closed meeting of the President's Export Council Subcommittee on Export Administration (PECSEA) will be held June 23, 1999, 9:00 a.m., at the U.S. Department of Commerce, Herbert C. Hoover Building, Room 4832, 14th Street between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues, N.W.,

Washington, D.C. The Subcommittee provides advice on matters pertinent to those portions of the Export Administration Act, as amended, that deal with United States policies of encouraging trade with all countries with which the United States has diplomatic or trading relations and of controlling trade for national security and foreign policy reasons.

Public Session

1. Opening remarks by the Chairman.
2. Presentation of papers or comments by the public.
3. Update on Administration export control initiatives.
4. Task Force reports.

Closed Session

5. Discussion of matters properly classified under Executive Order 12958, dealing with the U.S. export control program and strategic criteria related thereto.

The General Session of the meeting is open to the public and a limited number of seats will be available. Reservations are not required. To the extent time permits, members of the public may present oral statements to the Committee. Written statements may be submitted at any time before or after the meeting. However, to facilitate distribution of public presentation materials to the Committee members, the Committee suggests that public presentation materials or comments be forwarded before the meeting to the address listed below: Ms. Lee Ann Carpenter, Advisory Committees MS: 3876, Bureau of Export Administration, 15th St. & Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230.

A Notice of Determination to close meetings, or portions of meetings, of the Subcommittee to the public on the basis of 5 U.S.C. 522 (c)(1) was approved October 16, 1997, in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. A copy of the Notice of Determination is available for public inspection and copying in the Central Reference and Records Inspection Facility, Room 6020, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. For further information, contact Ms. Lee Ann Carpenter on (202) 482-2583.

Dated: June 1, 1999.

Iain S. Baird,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Export Administration.

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