

Notices

Federal Register

Vol. 64, No. 117

Friday, June 18, 1999

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Cannon Gulch Project, Boise National Forest, ID

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Mountain Home Ranger District of the Boise National Forest will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a timber salvage project in the Cannon Gulch project area, located immediately southwest of Pine, Idaho. Access is via Forest Highway 61. The project area encompasses approximately 1,100 acres of National Forest System land and is located 60 road miles northeast of Mountain Home and about 100 road miles east of Boise, Idaho.

The agency invites written comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis. The agency also hereby gives notice of the environmental analysis and decisionmaking process that will occur on the proposal so that interested and affected people are aware of how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

Proposed Action

The proposed action would commercial thin and salvage harvest approximately 500 acres. Prescribed fire would be used on approximately 240 acres (40 acres of site preparation for tree planting, an additional 100 acres to take advantage of natural fuel breaks, and 100 acres to rejuvenate aspen). Logs would be yarded with a helicopter using one helicopter landing south of the Pine schoolhouse. Conifer seedlings would be planted on 40 acres. The activities would occur from 2000 to 2001.

Preliminary Issues

One significant issue has been identified with the proposed action which is that timber harvest would

develop a portion of the Rainbow Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA), changing the wilderness attributes on that portion. The developed portion would not be given future consideration for wilderness designation under current Forest Service guidelines.

Possible Alternatives to the Proposed Action

One alternative to the proposed action identified is the no action alternative. Other alternatives may be developed as issues are raised and information is received.

Decisions To Be Made

The Boise National Forest Supervisor will decide whether to conduct timber management and harvest activities now or to defer them until a later time. If he chooses to conduct timber management and harvest activities now, he will decide which acres to treat and which logging systems to use; what, if any, acres to treat with prescribed fire; and what mitigation and/or monitoring measures to implement to meet Forest standards and minimize resource conflicts.

Schedule

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), August 1999. Final, November 1999.

Public Involvement

Scoping was initiated in January 1998. A scoping letter was sent to over 60 individuals, groups, organizations, and agencies. Comments received from these public involvement efforts will be incorporated into the analysis process.

Comments

Written comments concerning the proposed project and analysis are encouraged and should be postmarked within 30 days following publication of this announcement in the **Federal Register**. Mail comments to Jane Beaulieu, Mountain Home Ranger District, 2180 American Legion Boulevard, Mountain Home, ID 83647; telephone 208-587-7961. Further information can be obtained at the same location.

The comment period on the DEIS will be 45 days from the date 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 DEIS's 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). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the DEIS stage but not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement, may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1002 (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 on the proposed action, comments on the DEIS 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 DEIS 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.

Responsible Official

David D. Rittenhouse, Forest Supervisor, Boise National Forest, 1249 South Vinnell Way, Suite 200, Boise, ID 83709.

Dated: June 10, 1999.

Jack E. Williams,

Deputy Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 99-15371 Filed 6-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M