

hereby given that the decision to issue conveyance (DIC) to Sitnasuak Native Corporation, notice of which was published in the **Federal Register**, on September 22, 1998, is modified.

A notice of the modified DIC will be published once a week, for four (4) consecutive weeks, in the Nome Nugget. Copies of the modified DIC may be obtained by contacting the Alaska State Office of the Bureau of Land Management, 222 West Seventh Avenue, #13, Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7599.

Any party claiming a property interest which is adversely affected by the decision, an agency of the Federal government, or regional corporation, shall have until November 22, 1999 to file an appeal on the issues in the modified DIC. However, parties receiving service by certified mail shall have 30 days from the date of receipt to file an appeal. Appeals must be filed in the Bureau of Land Management at the address identified above, where the requirements for filing an appeal may be obtained. Parties who do not file an appeal in accordance with the requirements in 43 CFR P

art 4, Subpart E, shall be deemed to have waived their rights.

Except as modified, the decision, notice of which was given September 22, 1998, is final.

Jane Miller,

Land Law Examiner, Branch of ANCSA Adjudication.

[FR Doc. 99-27632 Filed 10-21-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Bureau of Land Management

Forest Service

[MT-060-08-1220-00, 1617P]

Notice of Availability of the Draft Off-Highway Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement and Plan Amendment

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior and Forest Service, Agriculture.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service (FS) have prepared a Draft Off-Highway Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Plan Amendment. The Draft EIS/Plan Amendment describes the analysis completed on the proposed management changes in off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on public lands administered by the BLM and FS,

Northern Region, in Montana, North Dakota, and portions of South Dakota. Five alternatives, including a No Action Alternative, were developed to meet the purpose and need of the project and respond to significant issues. The purpose and need are to address the impacts of OHV travel on open areas that are currently available to motorized cross-country travel. The No Action Alternative would maintain current management. Areas currently open yearlong or seasonally to cross-country travel would remain open. Alternatives 1 and 2 would restrict motorized cross-country travel yearlong. Alternative 3 would restrict motorized cross-country travel yearlong in North Dakota, most of Montana, and portions of South Dakota. Alternative 4 would limit motorized cross-country travel seasonally.

DATES: The comment period on the Draft EIS/Plan Amendment will end 90 days from the date the Environmental Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**. The expected end of the comment period is February 3, 2000. Open houses on the Draft EIS/Plan Amendment will be held in communities in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota during the review period. The locations for the open houses are listed below but also look for an article in your local paper because locations, dates and/or time may change.

Date	Location	Time (p.m.)	Place
November 15	Lemmon, SD	2:00-6:00	To be determined.
November 16	Buffalo, SD	2:00-6:00	Harding County Jury/Court Room.
November 16	Hamilton, MT	4:00-8:00	To be determined.
November 16	Libby, MT	4:00-9:00	Libby City Hall, Ponderosa Room.
November 17	Pierre, SD	2:00-6:00	RAMKOTA.
November 17	Kalispell, MT	5:00-8:00	Outlaw Inn.
November 17	Trout Creek, MT	1:00-4:00	U.S. Forest Service.
November 18	Belle Fourche, SD	2:00-6:00	BLM Office.
November 18	Eureka, MT	6:00-9:00	Lincoln Co. Electric.
November 18	Lewistown, MT	4:00-7:00	BLM Office, Airport Road.
November 19	Ekalaka, MT	2:00-6:00	Carter Country Jury/Court Room.
November 22	Great Falls, MT	4:00-7:00	BLM/FS Office, 1101 15th Street North.
November 22	Bozeman, MT	4:00-8:00	Gallatin Co Courthouse, 311 West Main.
November 29	Bowman, ND	4:00-8:00	To be determined.
November 30	Dickinson, ND	4:00-8:00	BLM Office, 2933 Third Avenue West.
November 30	Billings, MT	4:00-8:00	BLM Office, 5001 Southgate Drive.
November 30	Miles City, MT	5:00-7:00	BLM Office, 111 Garryowen Road.
December 1	Bismarck, ND	4:00-8:00	U.S. Forest Service, 240 West Century.
December 1	Red Lodge, MT	4:00-8:00	U.S. Forest Service.
December 1	Colstrip, MT	5:00-7:00	Bicentennial Library, 415 Willow Avenue.
December 2	Watford City, ND	4:00-8:00	To be determined.
December 2	Lincoln, MT	4:00-8:00	Lincoln Community Hall.
December 2	Glendive, MT	5:00-7:00	Glendive Medical Center, Carney Conference Room #2.
December 3	Rapid City, SD	3:00-7:00	West River Research & Ag. Crt., 1905 Plaza Blvd.
December 6	Townsend, MT	4:00-8:00	Townsend Library.
December 7	Missoula, MT	4:00-8:00	Boone and Crocket Club.
December 7	Malta, MT	4:00-7:00	BLM Office.
December 7	Havre, MT	4:00-7:00	BLM Office.
December 7	Broadus, MT	5:00-7:00	Powder River County Courthouse, Election Rm.
December 8	Helena, MT	4:00-8:00	U.S. Forest Service, 2880 Skyway Drive.
December 8	Glasgow, MT	4:00-7:00	BLM Office.
December 9	Dillon, MT	4:00-8:00	U.S. Forest Service, 420 Barrett Street.

Date	Location	Time (p.m.)	Place
December 9	Butte, MT	4:00–8:00	BLM Office, 106 North Parkmont.
December 14	Browning, MT	3:30–7:00	Tribal Offices.
December 15	Choteau, MT	2:00–7:00	Stage Stop Inn.

ADDRESSES: Address all comments to OHV Plan Amendment, Lewistown Field Office, P.O. Box 1160, Lewistown, MT 59457–1160.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the above Lewistown address during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jerry Majerus, 406–538–1924 or Dick Kramer, 406–329–1008.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This Draft EIS/Plan Amendment discloses the potential environmental consequences of managing cross-country off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on public lands administered by the BLM and FS, Northern Region, in Montana, North Dakota, and portions of South Dakota (excluding the Black Hills National Forest, Buffalo Gap Grasslands and the Fort Pierre Grasslands). The agencies recognize that many recreation users do not differentiate between BLM and FS lands. The agencies feel it is better customer service to have consistent policies across agency boundaries; therefore, the plan amendment will be a joint BLM and FS proposal. The BLM and FS are joint lead agencies responsible for preparation of the EIS/plan amendment.

The increased popularity and widespread use of OHVs on public lands in the 1960s and early 1970s prompted the development of a unified federal policy for such use. Executive Order 11644 was issued in 1972 and Executive Order 11989 was issued in 1977. They provided direction for federal agencies to establish policies and provide for procedures to control and direct the use of OHVs on public

lands so as to (1) protect the resources of those lands, (2) promote the safety of all users of those lands, and (3) minimize conflicts among the various uses on those lands. The BLM and FS have developed regulations in response to the Executive Orders (43 CFR 8342 and 36 CFR 219 and 295). Under those regulations, OHV use can be restricted or prohibited to minimize (1) damage to the soil, watershed, vegetation, or other resources of the public lands; (2) harm to wildlife or wildlife habitats; and (3) conflict between the use of OHVs and other types of recreation.

The BLM and FS recognize in their respective resource management plans and forest plans, policy, and manual direction, that off-highway vehicle use is a valid recreational activity when properly managed. Managing this use along with other recreation uses and the need to protect resource values has become increasingly more difficult with increasing public demands and decreasing budgets.

The purpose of this EIS/plan amendment is to address the impacts of wheeled (motorcycles, four-wheel drive vehicles, sport utility vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, etc.) off-highway vehicle travel on open areas that are currently available to motorized cross-country travel. It will amend forest plan and resource management plan OHV area designations to preserve future options for site-specific travel planning. This would provide timely interim direction that would prevent further resource damage, user conflicts, and related problems, including new user-created roads, associated with motorized cross-country travel until subsequent site-specific travel planning is complete. Site-specific travel planning, or activity planning, will address OHV use on specific roads and trails. This amendment would not change the current limited/restricted yearlong or closed designations, or designated intensive off-road vehicle use areas.

About 16 million acres of public land are currently available to motorized cross-country travel in the analysis area, either yearlong or seasonally, which has the potential to: spread noxious weeds, cause erosion, damage cultural sites, create user conflicts, and disrupt wildlife and damage wildlife habitat.

Problems do not occur equally throughout the analysis area. Motorized cross-country travel is generally limited by current technology to areas that are less steep and have more open vegetative communities. Random use in open areas has created trail networks throughout the analysis area. Some of this use has occurred in riparian areas and on highly erodible slopes.

Monitoring of OHV travel at FS and BLM offices indicates that problems exist where unrestricted motorized cross-country travel is allowed. Many units have completed or begun site-specific travel planning. Most notable efforts are the Elkhorn Mountains near Helena, Montana, and the Whitetail-Pipestone area near Butte, Montana.

Members of the public and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission have shared their concerns about unrestricted OHV travel on public lands. The four BLM Resource Advisory Councils (citizen groups that represent a balance of commodity, conservation, and other public interests) in Montana, North Dakota, and portions of South Dakota, expressed serious concerns about allowing continued, unrestricted, motorized cross-country travel on public lands.

The BLM and FS are concerned that continuing unrestricted use could potentially increase these problems. Areas that are open yearlong or seasonally to motorized cross-country travel in current forest plans and resource management plans will require a plan amendment to address these issues. This proposal to manage the cross-country aspect of motorized vehicle use is part of our responsibility as public land managers to balance human use with the need to protect natural resources.

Authority: Sec. 202, Pub. L. 94–579, 90 Stat. 2747 (43 U.S.C. 1712), Sec. 6, Pub. L. 94–588, 90 Stat. 2949 (16 U.S.C. 1604).

Dated: October 15, 1999.

Thomas P. Lonnie,

Acting State Director, Bureau of Land Management.

Dale N. Bosworth,

Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service.

[FR Doc. 99–27629 Filed 10–21–99; 8:45 am]

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