

Notices

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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

Southwestern Region, Arizona, New Mexico, West Texas and Oklahoma Proposed Projects in the Agua/Caballos Analysis Area, Carson National Forest, Rio Arriba County, NM

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Revised notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Carson National Forest, El Rito Ranger District is preparing a supplement to the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) to disclose new information relevant to the analysis of proposed projects in the Agua/Caballos analysis area. Proposed projects include the allocation of old growth, harvesting of trees for sawtimber and forest products, prescribed burning, thinning, construction of new roads and reconstruction or closure of existing roads. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement was published in the **Federal Register** on April 22, 1997 (62 FR 195342). A Notice of Availability for the DEIS was published in the **Federal Register** on February 19, 1999 (64 FR 8356).

After further verification on the ground, Alternative C (the preferred alternative) was found to have more miles of new road construction, and Alternatives D and E were found to have more miles of reconstruction, than what was described and analyzed in the DEIS. These new road figures are expected to change the effects analyses for alternatives C–E, especially those associated with soils and watershed. The supplement will disclose the new miles of road construction and reconstruction for alternatives C–F and any environmental consequences related to these new figures. In addition, the supplement will add a new

alternative (Alternative G) and its effects to the analysis. Alternative G is being developed in response to comments received from the public on the DEIS.

DATES: It is estimated that the supplement will be completed and distributed by the end of January, 2000. A 45 day comment period will follow. The final environmental impact statement is estimated to be released in April, 2000.

ADDRESSES: The supplement will be available upon request from the Carson Forest Supervisor's Office, 208 Cruz Alta Road, Taos, NM 87571, Attn: Planning. Comments related to the supplement can be sent to the same address.

Responsible Official: The Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest, is the responsible official and will decide whether or not projects will be implemented by the Forest Service in the Agua/Caballos analysis area. If so, the Forest Supervisor will decide what projects and where, how and when they will be implemented.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Forest Planner, Carson Forest Supervisor's Office (505) 758–6200.

Dated: December 8, 1999.

Gilbert Vigil,

Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest.

[FR Doc. 99–32899 Filed 12–17–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–U

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Copper Mountain Resort Trails and Facilities Improvements Plan White River National Forest—Summit County, Colorado

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to disclose the anticipated environmental effects of Copper Mountain Resort's (CMR) proposed Trails and Facilities Improvements Plan. The proposed development includes the replacement and upgrading of two existing lifts, development of two new lifts, expanding on-mountain snowmaking coverage, creation of additional skiing

trails and glades, the renovation and expansion of an existing on-mountain restaurant, construction of a snow-vehicle maintenance shop with fuel storage, the development of two skier warming facilities, and upgrading one existing ski patrol facility.

The agency gives notice of the full environmental analysis and decision-making process that will occur on the proposal so that interested and affected individuals may become aware of how they may participate in the process and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the proposal and environmental analysis should be received by January 21, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments concerning this proposal to Michael Liu, Special Project Coordinator, Dillon Ranger District, P.O. BOX 620, Silverthorne, Colorado, 80498. Fax: 970 468–7735. E-mail: Liu_Mike/r2_whiteriver@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Direct questions about the proposed action and EIS to Michael Liu, Special Project Coordinator, Dillon Ranger District, P.O. BOX 620, Silverthorne, Colorado, 80498. Phone: 970 262–3440.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed action would increase recreational opportunities at Copper Mountain Resort while remaining within the existing Special Use Permit Boundary. Presently, alpine skiing/snowboarding and other resort activities are provided to the public through a Special Use Permit (SUP) issued by the U.S. Forest Service and administered by the White River National Forest (WRNF). Many of the proposed projects have been conceptually approved through previous National Environmental Policy Act analysis of the resort's Master Development Plan.

The project is located on National Forest System lands within sections 29, 30, 31, and 32, Township 6 South, Range 78 West, sections 5, 6, and 7, Township 7 South, Range 78 West, section 25, 26, 35, and 36, Township 6 South, Range 79 West, and sections 1, 2, 11, and 12, Township 7 South, Range 79 West, of the 6th Principal Meridian.

The proposed improvements were found to be generally consistent with the White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and Regional Guide direction. It was determined that a non-significant Forest Plan amendment may be required

to meet the Visual Quality objective contained within the Management Prescription for the 9A Management Area. The proposed improvements are considered necessary in light of current resort deficiencies, increased visitation experienced over the past decade, and projected future visitation. The ensuing analysis will provide additional site specific detail for portions of the MDP to accommodate changing socio-economic and environmental considerations, and may modify previous approvals shown in the MDP in response to environmental issues.

Over the past five months, a "Collaborative Frontloaded Interagency Process" was conducted to establish a cooperative dialogue with various state, local, and federal agencies and to garner their input to the preliminary proposal. Additionally, CMR conducted several public forums allowing the community an opportunity to provide input to the proposal formulation process.

Purpose and Need: Purpose 1: To qualitatively improve Alpine skiing and snowboarding opportunities and bring infrastructure into balance with current use levels.

A. To improve quality, distribution, and circulation of intermediate through expert skiers and riders by enhancing access to and from less accessible terrain.

B. To enhance teaching facilities completing the learning area, and to provide an atmosphere responsive to the needs of beginning level guests.

C. To increase the amount of groomed, gladed terrain, responding to changing skier/boarder preferences, desires for these types of terrain, and develop appropriate management of gladed area throughout the resort.

D. To improve the balance between skiable terrain and existing lift capacity.

E. To improve circulation and address guest expectations for reliable, diverse, high-quality, early-season terrain. Additional snowmaking would provide durable coverage on high traffic, and exposed areas.

F. To increase the quantity, and improve the quality of on-mountain seating, improving the quality of the guest experience, increasing the range of services provided, and minimizing base area congestion.

Purpose 2: To improve operational efficiencies by incorporating technological innovations and through the development, renovation, relocation, and centralization of facilities.

A. To provide a snow vehicle maintenance shop, which can be easily accessed by employees, vehicles, and materials during the winter, and is located closer to the majority of the

terrain and facilities being served. Development of a new facility would allow reallocation of the existing shop space to maintenance of the rubber-tired fleet, thus maximizing operational efficiencies. A more centrally located facility would increase operational efficiencies, and increase the effective productivity of the grooming and maintenance fleet.

B. To upgrade and replace aged infrastructure, thereby reducing maintenance requirements, increasing operational efficiencies and reliability, meeting guest expectations, and incorporating modern technologies.

C. To install underground snowmaking infrastructure on trails currently being covered, thereby reducing risks to personnel, decreasing labor requirements, and incorporating current technology resulting in higher productivity.

D. To provide an emergency egress route from Copper Bowl, allowing guest and employee egress in the event of a lift failure, and facilitating rapid evacuation of patients with life-threatening conditions. To provide a ski patrol duty station in the Tucker Mountain pod sized to ensure the appropriate availability of emergency equipment and personnel.

Purpose 3: To integrate ski area development and use with ecological principals such as managing habitats, water resources, forest cover, and connectivity thus maintaining viable plant and animal populations.

A. To ensure projects are designed and implemented to maintain functions and values of critical or unique habitats as identified by resource professionals.

The Proposed Action: The proposed improvements include: the replacement and upgrading of two existing lifts (Alpine and Sierra), development of two new lifts (one on Tucker Mountain and a teaching lift in the Union Creek area), expanding on-mountain snowmaking coverage by approximately 400 acres, creation of additional skiing trails and glades, the renovation and expansion of an existing on-mountain restaurant (Solitude Station), construction of a snow-vehicle maintenance shop with fuel storage, the development of two skier warming facilities, and upgrading one existing ski patrol facility.

Preliminary Issues: Identified preliminary issues include potential forest fragmentation, effects to wildlife, botanical resources, wetlands, water quality, mountain hydrology, and the relationship of the proposed action to future development of adjacent real estate.

Public Involvement: Public questions and comments regarding this proposal

are an integral part of this environmental analysis process. Comments will be used to identify issues and develop alternatives to CMR's proposal. To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft EIS 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 EIS 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.

A public meeting will be held on January 11, 2000 at 5:30 p.m. in the Summit County Commons Building, 37 County Road 1005, Frisco Colorado. The purpose of the meeting will be to provide the public with an opportunity to become more familiar with the proposal and to ask questions. Additional information may also be obtained on the web by accessing: http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver/reading_room.html

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215 or 217. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requestor of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without names and addresses within thirty (30) days.

Public comments are appreciated throughout the analysis process. The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in September 2000 and will be available

for public review at that time. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA publishes the Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. Completion of the final EIS is anticipated in February 2001.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice of this early stage of public participation and of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of the draft EIS must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's positions and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft stage may be waived or dismissed by the court if not raised until after the completion of the final EIS. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (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 comment period so substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider and respond to them in the final EIS.

In the Final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to substantive comments received during the comment period, which pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the draft EIS.

Responsible Official: The responsible official is Martha Ketelle, Forest Supervisor for the White River National Forest. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in a Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to appeal under 36 CFR part 215 or part 251.

Dated: December 13, 1999.

Martha J. Ketelle,
Forest Supervisor,

White River National Forest.

[FR Doc. 99-32833 Filed 12-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Western Washington Cascades Provincial Interagency Executive Committee (PIEC) Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Western Washington Cascades PIEC Advisory Committee will meet on January 19, 2000, at the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Headquarters, 21905 64th Avenue West, in Mountlake Terrace, WA. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. and continue until about 4:00 p.m. Agenda items to be covered focus around orientation and education regarding the Finney Adoptive Management Area (AMA) and include: (1) Issues and opportunities, (2) agency needs, (3) Chinook Salmon and Bull Trout recovery, (4) monitoring processes, and (5) demographics. The meeting will also include a segment of time set aside to discuss other relevant issues such as recent court rulings, the status of the new planning regulations, the status of the national roads policy processes, and the status of the roadless area issue.

The Provincial Advisory Committee provides advice regarding ecosystem management for federal lands within the Western Washington Cascades Province, as well as advice and recommendations to promote better integration of forest management activities among federal and non-federal entities. The Advisory Committee is a key element of implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Direct questions regarding this meeting to Penny Sundblad, Province Liaison, USDA Forest Service, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Mt. Baker Ranger District, 2105 State Route 20, Sedro-Woolley, Washington 98284 (360-856-5700, Extension 321).

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. appendix)

Dated: December 14, 1999.

Terry DeGrow,

Acting Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 99-32832 Filed 12-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Southwest Oregon Province Interagency Executive Committee (PIEC) Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Southwest Oregon PIEC Advisory Committee will meet on January 6, 2000 at the Bureau of Land Management, 1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, Oregon. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. and continue until 4:30 p.m. Agenda items to be covered include: (1) Province Advisory Committee (PAC) mission and improving PAC

effectiveness; (2) Water Quality Management Planning update; and (3) Public Comment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Direct questions regarding this meeting to Roger Evenson, Province Advisory Committee Coordinator, USDA, Forest Service, Umpqua National Forest, 2900 NW Stewart Parkway, Roseburg, Oregon 97470, phone (541) 957-3344.

Dated: December 14, 1999.

Don Ostby,

Designated Federal Official.

[FR Doc. 99-32831 Filed 12-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Lower Hamakua Ditch Watershed, County of Hawaii, HI

AGENCY: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

ACTION: Notice of availability of record of decision.

SUMMARY: Kenneth M. Kaneshiro, Responsible Federal Official for projects administered under the provisions of Public Law 83-566 in the State of Hawaii, is hereby providing notification that a record of decision to proceed with the installation of the Lower Hamakua Ditch watershed project, signed November 1, 1999, is available.

The record of decision documents the intent to implement Alternative 3—Repair and Restoration of the Lower Hamakua Ditch. The project will provide a stable, adequate, and affordable supply of agricultural water to farmers and other agricultural producers in the Lower Hamakua Ditch service area. The improvements will provide structural repair and reduce water losses along the Lower Hamakua Ditch. Twenty-two of the 24 wooden flumes will be replaced with corrugated metal pipe or inverted pipe siphons. Metal I-beams will replace the rotting timber supports. In the open ditch sections, sediment will be removed and the concrete lining will be repaired. The diversion structures at Kawaiinui, Alakahi, and Koiawe streams will be repaired and modified to prevent structural failure, reduce maintenance requirements, and restore 30 percent of base streamflow to Waipio Valley streams. A 1-MG reservoir will be installed at the Honokaia lateral. The 10-MG Paauiilo Reservoir will be lined. Approximately ten lateral distribution systems will be repaired or installed. Hakalaoa Falls will be restored through