

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 1786.

Dated: March 21, 2000.

Samuel Chambers, Jr.,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 00-7547 Filed 3-27-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-30-C

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Land and Resource Management Plan Amendments for Canada Lynx in Colorado and Southern Wyoming

AGENCY: USDA Forest Service.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in conjunction with amendments to land and resource management plans for the Routt National Forest; Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests; Pike and San Isabel National Forests; the San Juan National Forest; Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests; and the Rio Grande National Forest located in the State of Colorado; and the Medicine Bow National Forest located in the State of Wyoming.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Part 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219.10(g), the Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region gives notice of the agency's intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in conjunction with the amendments of Land and Resource Management Plans (hereafter referred to as Forest Plans or Plans) for the National Forests listed above. The White River National Forest is not included in this proposed action because this unit will include lynx management direction in its final revised forest plan scheduled to be completed in May 2001.

On the basis of new information regarding lynx biology developed since the issuance of the plans mentioned above, the Forest Service has identified a need to update management direction. This notice described a proposal to change Forest Plans to the extent necessary to respond to recommendations in the Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS) and other new information regarding the Canada lynx and its habitat.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be postmarked by May 11, 2000. The agency expects to file a draft environmental impact statement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and make it available for public, agency, and tribal government comment in the summer of 2000. A final

environmental impact statement is expected to be filed in early 2001.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: Howard Sargent, Team Leader, Lynx Plan Amendment Team, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region, PO Box 25127, Lakewood, Colorado, 80225-0127.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Howard Sargent, Team Leader, (970) 498-1201.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Lyle Laverty, Rocky Mountain Regional Forester, P.O. Box 25127, Lakewood, CO 80225-0127.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Regional Forester gives notice that the Rocky Mountain Region of the USDA Forest Service is beginning an environmental analysis and decision-making process for this proposed action so that interested or affected people can participate in the analysis and contribute to the final decision. The Forest Service is seeking information, comments, and assistance from individuals, organizations, tribal governments, and federal, state, and local agencies who are interested in or may be affected by the proposed action (36 CFR 219.6). The public is invited to help identify issues and define the range of alternatives to be considered in the environmental impact statement. The range of alternatives to be considered in the DEIS will be based on issues and specific decisions to be made. Written comments identifying issues for analysis and the range of alternatives are encouraged.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to amend Forest Plans for the units listed previously in this notice to, as necessary, establish or revise goals, standards, and guidelines that respond to recommendations contained in the LCAS and other new information regarding the lynx and its habitat. The decision to be made is how to amend the Forest Plans to incorporate direction that responds to the LCAS recommendations and other new information regarding the lynx, if at all. Attachment 1 displays the key LCAS recommendations phrased in terms of goals, standards, and guidelines that will be considered as part of the environmental analysis process. Note that existing Forest Plans may already contain some direction that is essentially the same as the LCAS recommendations. Each plan will be amended only to the extent necessary to appropriately respond to the LCAS recommendations and other new information.

A range of alternatives that respond to issues developed during scoping will be considered when amending the Forest Plans. A reasonable range of alternatives will be evaluated and reasons will be given for eliminating some alternatives from detailed study, if that occurs. A "no-action alternative" is required, meaning that Forest Plans would not be amended.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this proposal is to establish Forest Plan management direction designed to respond to the recommendations in the LCAS and other new information concerning the lynx and its habitat. This proposal is limited to the National Forests in the Rocky Mountain Region and Southern Rocky Mountain Geographic Area that have lynx habitat (see list above).

The Secretary of Interior listed the Canada lynx as a threatened species on March 24, 2000. This decision will take effect 30 days after publication. A key finding of the listing decision is that "the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms, specifically the lack of guidance for conservation of lynx in Federal land management plans" (Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, 50 CFR Part 17, Determination of Threatened Status for the Contiguous U.S. Distinct Population Segment of the Canada Lynx and Related Rule, p. 147) has contributed to the species' decline. When a species is listed, Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to ensure that activities they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species or destroy or adversely modify its critical habitat.

This action is also needed to assure that land and resource management plans are in compliance with species viability requirements in the planning regulations that implement the National Forest Management Act. The Rocky Mountain Region has identified the lynx as a sensitive species, it is listed by the State of Colorado as an endangered species, and the State of Wyoming lists the lynx as a "protected animal", meaning it is protected from take.

A large amount of new information about the lynx has become available in the past two years. Key elements of this new information to be considered include: (1) The LCAS; (2) a compendium and interpretation of current scientific knowledge in "Ecology and Conservation of Lynx in the United States, published in October 1999; (3) the Canada Lynx Conservation Agreement, prepared in February 2000

and signed by the Forest Service Regional Foresters and Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Directors responsible for the geographic areas within the range of the lynx in the conterminous United States; (4) the release of lynx in Colorado by the Colorado Division of Wildlife; and (5) the decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced on March 24, 2000, to list the lynx as a threatened species in the conterminous United States, under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act. This information has provided a better understanding of the lynx, its prey base and habitat requirements, particularly the forest communities it uses and the ecology of those forests, and risk factors affecting lynx productivity, mortality, and movements. Forest Plans in the Region were largely developed before issues regarding the lynx were identified and without the benefit of the new information on the lynx and its habitat.

Public Participation

Public participation will be solicited with news releases or by notifying people in person or by mail. The first formal opportunity to comment is during the scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7) which begins with the issuance of this notice of intent. All comments, including the names and addresses when provided, are placed in the record and are available for public inspection and copying at the Forest Service Regional Office. Persons wishing to inspect the comments are encouraged to call ahead (303-275-5103) to facilitate entrance into the building.

The Forest Service will work with tribal governments to address issues concerning Indian tribal self-government and sovereignty, natural and cultural resources held in trust, Indian tribal treaty and Executive order rights, and any issues that significantly or uniquely affect their communities.

Preliminary Issues

Some preliminary issues have already been identified and are listed below. These issues apply only to National Forest system lands on the units listed previously in this notice.

- The adoption of new Forest Plan goals, standards and guidelines is expected to maintain or enhance habitat conditions for the lynx on National Forest lands. Project implementation is expected to facilitate the development of landscape and site characteristics suitable for lynx and its principal prey, the snowshoe hare.

- The adoption of new Forest Plan goals, standards and guidelines may

affect the areas where winter and summer recreation take place and how and when these activities are conducted. Activities like cross country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road vehicle use and developed recreation facilities could be affected. New direction could also affect ski area operations and expansions.

- The adoption of new Forest Plan goals, standards and guidelines may affect the ability to use roads and trails, the construction of roads and trails and the closure or decommissioning of roads and trails. This potentially influences activities like recreational use, oil and gas leasing, mineral development or other uses associated with Forest Service roads and trails.

- The adoption of new Forest Plan goals, standards and guidelines may affect timber harvest practices in order to protect lynx denning sites and foraging areas or to minimize disturbance in key habitat linkage areas. New plan direction may also affect the type of harvest or the timing of harvest in order to preserve or enhance the habitat of the snowshoe hare, a key prey species.

- The adoption of new Forest Plan goals, standards and guidelines may affect livestock grazing by requiring that vegetation conditions be maintained to support lynx prey species.

The Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region is the lead agency. No joint lead agencies have been identified at this time. The Forest Service will continue to cooperate with other federal and state agencies as this action proceeds. There are no permits or licenses required to implement the proposed action.

Release and Review of the EIS

The Forest Service expects the DEIS to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public, agency, and tribal government comment in the summer of 2000. At that time, the EPA will publish a notice of availability for the DEIS in the Federal Register. The comment period on the DEIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA 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, potential reviewers of the DEIS must participate in the environmental review of the proposal, including this initial scoping period, in such a way that their participation is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewers'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 are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) may be waived or dismissed by the courts; *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 throughout the process, 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 FEIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns relating to the proposed actions, comments on the DEIS, when it become available, 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 statements. In addressing these points, 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. After the comment period on the DEIS ends, comments will be analyzed, considered, and responded to by the Forest Service in preparing the Final EIS. The FEIS is scheduled to be completed in early 2001. The responsible official will consider the comments, responses, environmental consequences discussed in the FEIS, and applicable laws, regulations and policies in making decisions regarding these amendments. The responsible official will document the decisions and reasons for the decisions in a Record of Decision. The decision will be subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 215 or in accordance with 36 CFR 217 depending on whether the amendments are significant under the National Forest Management Act requirements at 36 CFR 219.10(f).

Dated: March 22, 2000.

David A. Heerwagen,

Deputy Regional Forester, Rocky Mountain Region, USDA Forest Service.

Attachment 1—Key Recommendations of the LCAS, Phrased in Terms of Potential Goals, Standards, and Guidelines

Goals, Standards, and Guidelines

The goals, standards, and guidelines generally apply only to lynx habitat within a Lynx Analysis Unit. Lynx habitat occurs in mesic coniferous forests that have cold, snowy winters and provide a prey base of snowshoe hare. Lynx habitat is a mosaic within the Englemann spruce, subalpine fir, lodgepole pine, aspen, mesic Douglas-fir and mesic white fir forested landscapes, generally between 8,000 and 12,000 feet. High elevation sagebrush and mountain shrub communities found adjacent to or intermixed with the forest communities may be potentially important as habitat for alternative prey species. Ponderosa pine is generally not considered lynx habitat.

Category: Physical

Water and Aquatic Resources—Riparian Areas and Wetlands

Standard: Refer to: Range, standard #1.

Category: Biological

Range

Goals: 1. Manage grazing to maintain or move toward the composition and structure of native plant communities within lynx habitat and adjacent shrub-steppe habitats.

Standards: 1. Within lynx habitat, manage livestock grazing in riparian areas and willow carrs to maintain or achieve mid-seral or later condition to provide cover and forage for lynx prey species.

2. Delay livestock use in post-fire and post-harvest created openings until successful regeneration of the shrub and tree components occurs.

Guidelines: 1. Ensure that ungulate grazing does not impede the development of snowshoe hare habitat in natural or created openings within lynx habitat.

2. Manage grazing in aspen stands to ensure sprouting and sprout survival sufficient to perpetuate the long-term viability of the clones.

3. Maintain or achieve mid-seral or higher condition in shrub-steppe habitat that is within the elevational range of forested lynx habitat or that provides landscape connectivity between blocks of primary lynx habitat.

Silviculture

Goals: 1. Design regeneration harvest, planting, and thinning to develop characteristics suitable for lynx and snowshoe hare habitat.

2. Maintain suitable acres of lynx habitat and juxtaposition of habitat through time when planning timber sales and related activities.

Standards: 1. Pre-commercial thinning will be allowed only when stands no longer provide snowshoe hare habitat (e.g., self-pruning processes have eliminated snowshoe hare cover and forage availability during winter conditions with average snowpack).

2. In aspen stands within lynx habitat, favor regeneration of aspen.

3. Following a disturbance such as blowdown, fires, insects, and disease, where lynx denning habitat is less than 10% of a Lynx Analysis Unit, do not salvage harvest when the affected area is smaller than 5 acres if it could continue to lynx denning habitat. (Exceptions are developed recreation sites or other sites of high human concentration.) Where larger areas are affected, retain a minimum of 10% of the affected area per Lynx Analysis Unit in patches of at least 5 acres to provide future denning habitat. In such areas, defer or modify management activities that would prevent development or maintenance of lynx foraging habitat.

Also refer to:

- Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species, Lynx Analysis Units, standards 1 and 2.

- Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species, Denning and Foraging Habitat, standard #1.

- Travelways, standard #1.

Guidelines: 1. Management activities retain adequate amounts of coarse woody debris for lynx and snowshoe hare cover, if it exists on site.

2. Commercial thinning projects shall maintain or enhance lynx habitat.

3. Design vegetation management activities that consider retaining or encouraging tree species composition and structure that will provide habitat for red squirrels or other lynx alternate prey species.

Also refer to:

- Range, guideline #2.

- Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive Species, Denning and Foraging Habitat, guideline #1.

- Fire, guidelines 4 and 7.

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species

Lynx Analysis Units

Goals: 1. Maintain effectiveness of lynx habitat. (Effectiveness is primarily affected by high level of human use.)

Standards: 1. If more than 30% of the lynx habitat in a Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU) is currently in unsuitable condition, no further reduction of suitable habitat shall occur as a result of vegetation management activities.

2. Vegetation management shall not change more than 15 percent of lynx habitat within a LAU to unsuitable condition within a 10-year period.

Denning and Foraging Habitat

Goal: 1. Provide a landscape with interconnected blocks of high quality foraging and denning habitat that allows lynx movement between these habitats.

Standard: 1. Within a Lynx Analysis Unit, maintain denning habitat on at least 10% of the area that is capable of producing stands with characteristics suitable for denning habitat. Denning habitat should be well distributed, in patches generally larger than 5 acres. This applies to vegetation treatment, timber harvest, prescribed fire, fire suppression actions, and other similar activities.

Guidelines: 1. In areas where future denning habitat is desired, or to extend the production of snowshoe hare foraging habitat where forage quality and quantity is declining due to plant succession, consider improvement of habitat through activities such as commercial thinning and selection harvesting. Use harvesting and thinning to retain and recruit understories of small diameter conifers and shrubs preferred by hares and to retain and recruit coarse woody debris.

2. Maintain or improve the juxtaposition of denning to foraging habitat. This can be important in large wildfire events in late seral.

3. Design vegetation and fire management activities to retain or restore lynx denning habitat on landscapes with the highest probability of escaping stand-replacing fire events.

Connectivity and Fragmentation

Goals: 1. Maintain and, where necessary and feasible, restore lynx habitat connectivity across forested landscapes and within and between Lynx Analysis Units. Facilitate wildlife movement within key linkage areas considering highway crossing structures when feasible.

2. Within Lynx Analysis Units that have been fragmented by past management activities that reduced the quality of lynx habitat, management practices will be implemented to move toward forest composition, structure and patterns more similar to those that would have occurred under historical conditions and natural disturbance processes.

Predation/Competition

Goal: 1. Avoid management practices that would increase competition with and predation on lynx.

Prey Species:

Goals: 1. Reduce incidental harm or capture of lynx during predator control activities and ensure retention of adequate prey base.

2. Retain and enhance existing habitat conditions for important lynx prey species and alternate prey species, such as the red squirrel.

Category: Disturbance Processes**Fire**

Goal: 1. Restore fire as an ecological process through time and use fire as a tool to maintain, enhance, or restore lynx habitat.

Standards: Refer to:

- Silviculture, standard #3.

Sensitive Species, Lynx Analysis Units, standards 1 and 2.

- Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species, Denning and Foraging Habitat, standard #1.

Guidelines: 1. Consider prescriptions that can result in regeneration and the creation of snowshoe hare habitat when developing burn prescriptions, especially for lodgepole pine and aspen.

2. Design burn prescriptions to promote response by shrub and tree species that are favored by snowshoe hare.

3. Consider the need for pre-treatment of fuels before conducting management ignitions.

4. In lynx habitat, avoid constructing permanent firebreaks on ridges or saddles.

5. Minimize construction of temporary roads and machine fire lines to the extent possible during fire suppression activities in lynx habitat.

6. In the event of a large wildlife in stands that were formally late seral, during the post-disturbance assessment prior to restoration or salvage harvesting, evaluate the potential for providing for lynx denning and foraging habitat.

Also refer to:

- Silviculture, guideline #3.
- Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species, Denning and Foraging Habitat, guidelines 2 and 3.

Sensitive Species, Denning and Foraging Habitat, guidelines 2 and 3.

Category: Social**Recreation—Developed Recreation**

Standard: 1. Locate new or relocated trails, roads, and ski lift termini to direct winter use away from diurnal security habitat.

2. Protect key linkage areas when planning new or expanding recreational developments.

Guidelines: 1. Provide adequately sized coniferous inter-trail islands, including the retention of coarse woody material, to maintain snowshoe hare habitat when designing ski area expansions.

2. Identify and protect potential lynx security habitats in and around proposed developments or expansions.

3. Evaluate, and adjust as necessary, ski operations in expanded or newly developed areas to provide nocturnal foraging opportunities for lynx in a manner consistent with operational needs, especially in landscapes where lynx habitat occurs as narrow bands of coniferous forest across the mountain slopes.

Recreation—Dispersed Recreation

Standards: 1. Allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and designated snowmobile play areas by Lynx Analysis Units unless the designation serves to consolidate unregulated use and improves lynx habitat. Winter logging activity would be an exception.

Guidelines: 1. Limit or discourage activities that result in snow compaction in areas where it is shown to compromise lynx habitat. Such actions should be undertaken on a priority basis considering habitat function and importance.

Also refer to: Travelways, guidelines 3 and 4.

Category: Administrative**Infrastructure—Travelways**

Standard: 1. Close temporary roads constructed for timber sale activities in lynx habitat to public use during the winter.

Guidelines: 1. Design new roads that could impact lynx habitat, especially the entrance, for effective closure and subsequent decommissioning, if it meets overall management objectives.

2. Minimize roadside brushing on low speed, low volume roads in order to provide snowshoe hare habitat.

3. Locate trails and roads away from forested stringers to avoid fragmentation.

4. Minimize creation of permanent travelways on ridgetops and saddles that could facilitate increased access by lynx competitors in lynx habitat.

Real Estate—Land Adjustments

Goal: 1. Retain key wildlife linkage areas on National Forest System lands in public ownership. Cooperate with other ownerships to establish unified management direction via habitat conservation plans, conservation easement or agreements, and land acquisition.

Special Uses

Goal: 1. Design activities and facilities to minimize impacts on lynx habitat.

Standard: 1. Restrict authorized use under permits to designated routes when in lynx habitat on projects where over-snow access is required. Close newly constructed roads to public access during project activities. Upon project completion, evaluate the need to reclaim these roads.

Guideline: 1. Encourage remote monitoring of sites that are located in lynx habitat, so that they do not have to be visited daily.

Transportation and Utility Corridors

Goals: 1. Reduce the potential for lynx mortality related to highways.

2. Work cooperatively with the Federal Highway Administration and State Department of Transportation to address the movement needs of lynx.

Standard: Maintain connectivity of lynx habitat during the planning for highway right-of-ways, construction, reconstruction, and other possible transportation corridors.

Glossary

Fragmentation—Human alteration of natural landscape patterns, resulting in reduction of total area, increased isolation of patches, and reduced connectivity between patches of natural vegetation.

Highway—A road that is at least 2 lanes wide, paved with asphalt or concrete. Average daily traffic may exceed 5,000 vehicles and speeds are 45 mph or greater.

Key Linkage Areas—Critical areas for lynx habitat. Usually, the factors that place connectivity at risk are highways or private land developments. Special management emphasis is recommended to maintain or increase the permeability of key linkage areas.

Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU)—The LAU is a project analysis unit upon which direct, indirect, and cumulative effects analyses are performed. LAU boundaries should remain constant to facilitate planning and allow effective monitoring of habitat changes over time. An area of at least the size used by an individual lynx, about 25–50 square miles in contiguous habitat (should be larger in less contiguous, poorer quality, or naturally fragmented habitat).

Lynx Denning Habitat—Habitat used during parturition and rearing of young until they are mobile. The common component appears to be large amounts of coarse woody debris, either down logs or root wads. The coarse woody debris provides escape and thermal cover for kittens. Denning habitat may

be found either in older mature forest of conifer or mixed conifer/deciduous types, or in regenerating stands (greater than 20 years since disturbance).

Denning habitat must be located within daily travel distance of foraging habitat.

Lynx Diurnal Security Habitat—In lynx habitat, areas that provide secure winter daytime bedding sites for lynx in highly disturbed landscapes, *e.g.*, large developed winter recreational sites or areas of concentrated winter recreational use. It is presumed that lynx may be able to adapt to the presence of regular and concentrated human use during winter, so long as other critical habitat needs are being met, and security habitat blocks are present and adequately distributed in such disturbed landscapes. Security habitat will provide lynx the ability to retreat from human disturbance during winter daytime hours, emerging at dusk to hunt when most human activity ceases. Security habitats will generally be sites that naturally discourage winter human activity because of extensive forest floor structure, or stand conditions that otherwise make human access difficult, and should be protected to the degree necessary. Security habitats are likely to be most effective if they are sufficiently large to provide effective visual and acoustic insulation from winter activity and to easily allow movement away from infrequent human intrusion. These winter habitats must be distributed such that they are in proximity to foraging habitat.

Lynx Foraging Habitat—Habitat that supports primary prey (snowshoe hare) and/or important alternate prey (especially red squirrels) that are available to lynx. The highest quality snowshoe hare habitats are those that support a high density of young trees or shrubs (greater than 4,500 stems or branches per acre), tall enough to protrude above the snow. These conditions may occur in early successional stands following some type of disturbance, or in older forests with a substantial understory of shrubs and young conifer trees. Coarse wood debris, especially in early successional stages (created by harvest regeneration units and large fires), provides important cover for snowshoe hares and other prey. Red squirrel densities tend to be highest in mature cone-bearing forests with substantial quantities of coarse woody debris.

Lynx Habitat—Lynx occur in mesic coniferous forest that have cold, snowy winters and provide a prey base of snowshoe hare. Lynx records occur predominantly in lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and aspen vegetation cover types on

subalpine fir habitat types in the western United States. Cool, moist Douglas-fir, grand fir, or western larch forest, where they are interspersed with subalpine forest, also provide habitat for lynx.

Primary Lynx Habitat—Habitat that must be present to support foraging, denning, and rearing of young (in the western U.S. primary habitat is lodgepole pine or subalpine fir habitat types).

Secondary Lynx Habitat—Other vegetation types, when intermingled with or immediately adjacent to primary habitat, that contribute to lynx annual needs (cool/moist Douglas-fir habitat types adjacent to primary habitat).

Unsuitable Habitat Condition—An area that is capable of producing lynx foraging or denning habitat, but which currently does not have the necessary vegetation composition, structure, and/or density to support lynx and snowshoe hare populations during all seasons. For example, during the winter, vegetation must provide dense cover that extends above (greater than 6 feet) the average snow depth. Timber harvest, salvage harvest, commercial thinning, and prescribed fire may or may not result in unsuitable habitat conditions.

Snowshoe Hare Habitat—See foraging habitat.

[FR Doc. 00-7549 Filed 3-27-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-81-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Deschutes Provincial Interagency Executive Committee (PIEC), Advisory Committee; Notice of Meeting

SUMMARY: The Deschutes PIEC Advisory Committee will meet on April 12-13, 2000 at the Hood River Hotel at 102 Oak Avenue, Hood River, Oregon. The first day will be a field trip starting at 10:00 a.m. to visit restoration projects in the northern part of the Province. The second day will be a business meeting that will begin at 8:30 a.m. and finish at 3:30 p.m. Agenda items will include Wilderness Issues on the Mt. Hood, Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project Briefing and Comment Process, Working Group/Subcommittee Updates, Info Sharing Around the Province and a Public Forum from 3:00 p.m. till 3:30 p.m. All Deschutes Province Advisory Committee Meetings are open to the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mollie Chaudet, Province Liaison, USDA, Bend-Ft. Rock Ranger District,

1230 N.E. 3rd, Bend, OR, 97701, Phone (541) 383-4769.

Dated: March 21, 2000.

Sally Collins,

Deschutes National Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 00-7548 Filed 3-27-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Notice of Proposed Change to Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) of the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Oregon

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability of proposed change in Section IV of the FOTG of the NRCS in Oregon for review and comment.

SUMMARY: It is the intention of NRCS in Oregon to issue a revision to Conservation Practice Standard 580, Streambank and Shoreline Protection, in Section IV of the State Technical Guide in Oregon. This practice may be used in conservation systems that treat highly erodible land.

DATES: Comments will be received until April 27, 2000. Once the review and comment period is over and the standard is finalized, it will be placed in the individual Field Office Technical Guide in each field office.

ADDRESSES: Address all requests and comments to Bob Graham, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 101 SW Main Street, Suite 1300, Portland, Oregon 97204. Copies of this standard will be made available upon written request. You may submit electronic requests and comments to dave.dishman@or.usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bob Graham, 503-414-3200.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 343 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 states that revisions made after enactment of the law, to NRCS state technical guides used to carry out highly erodible land and wetland provisions of the law, shall be made available for public review and comment. For the next 30 days, the NRCS in Oregon will receive comments relative to the proposed changes. Following that period, a determination will be made by the NRCS in Oregon regarding disposition of those comments and a final determination of changes