

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

Agricultural Marketing Service

[Docket No. TB-96-19]

National Advisory Committee for Tobacco Inspection Services; Meeting

In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) announcement is made of the following committee meeting:

Name: National Advisory Committee for Tobacco Inspection Services.

Date: April 17, 1996.

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Place: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Tobacco Division, 771 Corporate Drive, Suite 500, Lexington, Kentucky 40503-5480.

Purpose: To elect officers, review various regulations issued pursuant to the Tobacco Inspection Act (7 U.S.C. 511 *et seq.*) and to discuss the level of tobacco inspection services currently provided to producers by AMS. The Committee will recommend the desired level of services to be provided to producers by AMS and an appropriate fee structure to fund the recommended services for the 1996-97 selling season.

The meeting is open to the public. Persons, other than members, who wish to address the Committee at the meeting should contact the Director, Tobacco Division, AMS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 502 Annex Building, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456, (202) 205-0567, prior to the meeting. Written statements may be submitted to the Committee before, at, or after the meeting.

Dated: March 28, 1996.

Lon Hatamiya,
Administrator.

[FR Doc. 96-8074 Filed 4-1-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

Forest Service

Olympic Provincial Interagency Executive Committee (PIEC), Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Olympic PIEC Advisory Committee will meet on April 26, 1996 at the Snider Work Center, 553 W. Snider Road, Forks, Washington. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. and continue until 3:30 p.m. Agenda items are: (1) Update on Economic Development Projects for 1996; (2) Forestry Training Center; (3) Jobs in the Woods Update; (4) Update on timber and other programs on the Soleduck District; (5) Status of Watershed Restoration 96 Projects; (6) Open Forum; and (7) Public Comments. All Olympic Province Advisory Committee Meetings are open to the public. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Direct questions regarding this meeting to Kathy Snow, Province Liaison, USDA, Quilcene Ranger District, P.O. Box 280, Quilcene, WA 98376, (360) 765-2211 or Ronald R. Humphrey, Forest Supervisor, at (360) 956-2301.

Dated: March 27, 1996.

Ronald R. Humphrey,
Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 96-7956 Filed 4-1-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

Extension of Certain Timber Sale Contracts and Deferral of Periodic Payments

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Periodically, lumber markets experience significant decreases in price. Purchasers of National Forest System timber are sometimes unable to harvest timber sales with high stumpage prices without incurring losses that threaten bankruptcy, mill closures, or severe economic losses. Government indices indicate a major downturn in the lumber market has occurred from fourth quarter of 1993 to the present. While many Forest Service timber sale contracts contain provisions to extent termination dates during severely declining markets, the mechanisms used in some areas of the country to measure severely declining markets do not appear to be performing as intended. Accordingly, the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment has determined that it is in the substantial overriding public interest to extend for 120 days certain

National Forest System timber sale contracts which terminate prior to August 1, 1995, while the Department considers alternatives to current procedures for contract term additions. In addition to extending contracts pursuant to the Under Secretary's finding, the Forest Service also will defer, for 120 days, periodic payments due on certain contracts prior to August 1, 1996, when such referral is requested by the timber sale purchaser. The intended effect is to minimize contract defaults, mill closures, and company bankruptcies.

DATE: The Under Secretary's determination was made on March 28, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rex Baumbach, Timber Management Staff, Forest Service, USDA, (202) 205-0855.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Forest Service sells timber from National Forest System lands to individuals or companies. Each sale is formalized by execution of a contract between the purchaser and the Forest Service. The contract sets forth the explicit terms and provisions of the sale, including such matters as the estimated volume of timber to be removed, period for removal, price to be paid to the Government, road construction and logging requirements, and environmental protection measures to be taken. The average contract period is approximately 3 years. Many sales, however, have contract terms of 1 or 2 years, while a few contracts have terms of 7 or 8 years.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 472a(c)) provides that the Secretary of Agriculture shall not extent any timber sale contract period with an original term of 2 years or more, unless he finds that the purchaser has diligently performed in accordance with an approved plan of operations or that the "substantial overriding public interest" justifies the extension. On December 7, 1990, the Department adopted a final rule at 36 CFR 223.52 permitting, upon written request by purchasers, extension of those contracts requiring periodic payments when the agency determines that adverse wood product market conditions have resulted in a drastic reduction in wood product prices. Purchasers must request such extensions in writing for all subsequent consecutive quarters in which market price indices are depressed. That rule

permits extensions of no more than twice the original contract length or 3 years.

Periodically, lumber markets may experience severe declines in prices. Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics producer price indices, the lumber market peaked in the fourth quarter of 1993. Since then, price indices have declined approximately 25 percent. The Douglas fir dressed lumber price index (commodity code 0801101) used to measure severe market declines in western Oregon and Washington has reflected the market decrease. Timber sale purchasers in this area have received 1 year of additional contract time, if requested. However, the other species dressed lumber price index (commodity code 081103) used to measure severe market declines in other parts of the West and the Northeast does not appear to be as predictable an indicator of market declines as the index used in the Pacific Northwest. As a result, timber sale purchasers in these areas have not received any additional time to complete their contracts. Some of these timber sale purchasers are facing contract default, mill closure, and bankruptcy. Additional contract time would assist these purchasers by giving time in which the market may improve or in which they could mix their high-priced sales with lower-priced sales.

The Government benefits if defaulted timber sale contracts, mill closures, and bankruptcies can be avoided by granting contract extensions, because having numerous, economically viable timber sale purchasers both maintains market opportunities and increases competition for National Forest System timber sales. These factors result in higher prices paid for such timber. In addition, the Government would avoid the difficult and expensive process of collective contract default damages.

The Department is in the process of evaluating alternatives to the existing market-related contract term addition rule. While these alternatives are being evaluated, it is desirable to prevent contract defaults by allowing additional contract time on certain contracts that will terminate before the policy review is complete.

Accordingly, the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment has made a finding that there is a substantial overriding public interest in extending sales for 120 days while the Department considers options for addressing declining market prices on timber under contract. The text of the finding, as signed by the Under Secretary, is set out at the end of this notice.

In addition, all contracts that use the Bureau of Labor Statistics "other species dressed" producer price index (commodity code 081103) to measure market declines may, if requested by the timber sale purchaser, obtain deferral for 120 days of periodic payments that are due prior to August 1, 1996.

Dated: March 28, 1996.

David G. Unger,
Associate Chief.

Determination of Substantial Overriding Public Interest for Extending Certain Timber Sale Contracts

Government indices indicate a major downturn in the lumber market has occurred from fourth quarter of 1993 to the present. While many Forest Service timber sale contracts contain provisions to extend termination dates during severely declining markets, the mechanisms used in some areas of the country to measure severely declining markets do not appear to be performing as intended.

The Douglas fir dressed lumber price index (commodity code 0801101) used to measure severe market declines in western Oregon and Washington has reflected the market decrease. Timber sale purchasers in this area have received 1 year of additional contract time, if requested. However, the other species dressed lumber price index (commodity code 081103) used to measure severe market declines in other parts of the West and the Northeast does not appear to be as predictable an indicator of market declines as the index used in the Pacific Northwest. As a result, timber sale purchasers in these areas have not received any additional time to complete their contracts. Some of these timber sale purchasers are facing contract default, mill closure, and bankruptcy. Additional contract time would assist these purchasers by giving time in which the market may improve or in which they could mix their high-priced sales with lower-priced sales.

The Government benefits if defaulted timber sale contracts, mill closures, and bankruptcies can be avoided by granting contract extensions, because having numerous, economically viable timber sale purchasers both maintains market opportunities and increases competition for National Forest System timber sales. These factors result in higher prices paid for such timber. In addition, the Government would avoid the difficult and expensive process of collecting contract default damages.

Therefore, pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 472a and to the authority delegated to me at 7 CFR 2.19, I have determined that it is

in the substantial overriding public interest to extend certain National Forest System timber sale contracts that use the Bureau of Labor Statistics "other species dressed" producer price index (commodity code 081103) to measure market changes while the Department evaluates alternatives for changing the current market-related contract term addition rule. Such an extension may be granted, upon a timber sale purchaser's written request, only for 120 days and only on contracts that would otherwise terminate prior to August 1, 1996.

Dated: March 28, 1996.

J.R. Lyons,

Deputy Under Secretary for Agriculture.

[FR Doc. 96-8089 Filed 3-29-96; 10:35 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Submission For OMB Review; Comment Request

DOC has submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. chapter 35).

Agency: Bureau of the Census.

Title: 1996 National Census Survey, aka. Administrative Records Notification Evaluation.

Form Number(s): DN-1A, DN-1B, DN-2A, DN-2B.

Agency Approval Number: None.

Type of Request: New collection.

Burden: 10,030 hours.

Number of Respondents: 27,200.

Avg Hours Per Response: 22 minutes.

Needs and Uses: The Census Bureau is testing the use of administrative records in the Census 2000 to estimate the characteristics of nonresponding households, supplement data for respondents that return incomplete forms, and estimate the number of persons missed within households. To enhance the usability of administrative record information, the Census Bureau is also considering asking respondents in the Census 2000 to provide their Social Security number (SSN). To further research in these areas the Census Bureau plans to conduct the Administrative Records Notification Evaluation (ARNE). Approximately 27,000 respondents nationwide will receive census forms to complete and mail back (both short- and long-form versions will be used). Accompanying the forms will be one of two different introductory letters containing varying statements addressing our use of administrative records. Additionally,