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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Routt Divide Blowdown Analysis, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest, Hahns Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District, Routt County, CO

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess and disclose the environmental effects of proposed salvage logging of a portion of the Routt Divide Blowdown outside the Mount Zirkel Wilderness Area on the Hahns Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District. The analysis area location is approximately 24 miles north of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, in portions of sections 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 of T9N, R83W; sections 1, 2, and 11 of T9N, R84W; sections 17, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33 and 34 of T10N, R83W; sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35 and 36 of T10N, R84W; and sections 33, 34, 35, and 36 of T11N, R84W.

This Notice of Intent is being issued under the authority of the Routt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and Final EIS of November 1983, which is the current guidance for forest management of the area. It is anticipated that the final Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Routt National Forest will be issued before the project decision for the Routt Divide Blowdown Analysis is complete. Therefore, information from the draft Proposed Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, issued in January 1996, is also included so readers can evaluate how the project would fit within guidance provided by the revised plan. The project will tier to the plan

that is in effect when the project decision is made.

The majority of lands affected by the blowdown event within the analysis area are currently allocated to Management Area 4B (wildlife habitat), as described in the current Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the Routt National Forest, approved in 1983. There are also some inclusions of blowdown within Management Areas 2A (semiprimitive motorized recreation) and 6B (range management). The North Fork and Middle Fork of Elk River are identified as eligible for consideration by Congress for Scenic River designation. Forested lands within management areas 4B, 6B and 2A are designated as suitable for timber production by the forest plan and do contribute to the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) calculation. Following is a summary of the general forest plan direction for the area.

Management Area 4B—Wildlife Habitat: Emphasizes wildlife habitat for one or more indicator species. Semiprivate motorized recreation opportunities will be provided, but vegetation manipulation and human activities are managed to provide optimum habitat for the selected species.

Management Area 2A—Semiprimitive motorized recreation: Emphasizes semiprimitive motorized recreation opportunities such as snowmobiling, four-wheel driving and motorcycling both on and off roads and trails in a naturally appearing environment. Management activities are visually subordinate. Timber harvest includes clearcutting and shelterwood and will enhance wildlife diversity.

Management area 6B—Rangeland Management: Emphasizes improving and/or maintaining rangeland. Improvements may include seeding, burning, spraying, crushing, or plowing as well as structural improvements.

The Forest Plan is being revised as required by the National Forest Management Act. The Draft Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Routt National Forest was issued in January 1996. The preferred alternative for the forest plan revision (Alternative C as described in the DEIS) allocates the majority of the project area to management area 5.11 (General Forest and Rangelands—Forest Vegetation Emphasis, which provides for a mix of

forest products, forage, wildlife habitat and recreation), and management area 5.13 (Forest Products, which is managed to produce commercial wood products). These lands are included in the ASQ calculations as suitable lands. The analysis area also includes lands allocated to management area 1.32 (Backcountry Recreation with Limited Motorized Winter Use), which provides for backcountry recreation opportunities in a natural-appearing landscape and continues to consider the North Fork and Middle Fork of Elk River as eligible for Scenic River designation. These lands are not included in the ASQ calculations as suitable lands.

DATES: Written comments and suggestions should be postmarked or received by February 21, 1998. The estimated date for filing the draft EIS is March 1998, followed by the final decision in May 1998.

ADDRESSES: The Responsible Official is Jerry E. Schmidt, Forest Supervisor; Medicine Bow—Routt National Forest; 925 Weiss Drive; Steamboat Springs, CO 80487–9315. Written comments and suggestions concerning the scope of the analysis may be sent to him at that address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Larry Lindner, Interdisciplinary Team Leader. Phone: 970–870–2220 (Steamboat Springs, CO) or 307–745–2424 (Laramie, WY).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On October 25, 1997, approximately 20,000 acres of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir along the western boundary of the Mount Zirkel Wilderness Area were subjected to a windthrow event. The majority of trees were windthrown in about 40–50 patches ranging in size from about 50 to 4,000 acres. Approximately 12,000 acres of windthrow are within the Mount Zirkel Wilderness and approximately 8,000 acres are outside and to the west of the wilderness boundary. This Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement concerns a portion of the blowdown that is within the North Fork and Middle Fork of Elk River watersheds outside the Mount Zirkel Wilderness Area. Additional analysis responsive to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will be completed for any activities that may be proposed for the remaining blowdown area.

Preliminary estimates indicate that as much as 80 million board feet of timber may be salvageable within the analysis area. Insects, rots and stains are expected to greatly reduce the economic value of the logs within a few years. Therefore, a timely decision is needed to maximize any economic benefit the people of the United States would achieve should the decision be made to salvage the blowdown sawtimber or any efforts to do so would be foregone.

Proposed Action

To restore recreation opportunities, to enhance regeneration of stands, and to use blowdown timber through salvage logging opportunities in response to the Routt Divide Blowdown event within one of the largest patches where road access already exists. The Forest Service intends to analyze: (a) The effects of the blowdown to the natural, social and economic resources; (b) the opportunities to mitigate the effects of the blowdown through salvage logging or other methods; and (c) the effects of salvage logging as well as any needed mitigation measures.

Most projects developed by the Forest Service are tailored to fit on-the-ground conditions and must meet numerous design constraints, such as size and shape of units, etc. The Routt Divide Blowdown was a natural disturbance rather than the result of a planned activity by the Forest Service. Since the blowdown was an act of nature rather than of Forest Service design, some aspects of projects developed in response to the blowdown may not look like projects that are regularly conceived, designed and implemented by the Forest Service.

Much of the analysis area has been inventoried as part of the analysis process for past and proposed sales, so there is already specific data and general information available. The Interdisciplinary Team will develop a site specific proposed action as part of its analysis for disclosure in the draft EIS. The design of any activities proposed for the area must be responsive to the effects of the event itself and will be guided by applicable Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. Should circumstances warrant deviation from the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, an amendment(s) to the Plan subject to the NEPA process may be necessary. Some proposed activities may be innovative and non-traditional due to the nature of the blowdown itself.

This environmental analysis shall consider the environmental consequences of the proposed action, as well as alternatives reasonably

implemented, while meeting the purpose and need of the action.

Decision To Be Made

The Medicine Bow-Routt Forest Supervisor will make a decision about the selection of one alternative among several concerning whether a portion of the Routt Divide Blowdown outside wilderness will be salvage logged and what mitigation measures will be required. The issues and alternatives developed from public comment and Interdisciplinary Team analysis will be clearly disclosed in the Environmental Impact Statement. From the project record alone, the Forest Supervisor and others who may review the decision, will be able to fully understand the consequences of implementing the selected alternative.

Preliminary Issues

- Effects to recreation
- Effects to Mount Zirkel Wilderness area
- Effects to Wild and Scenic River classification
- Effects to Roadless areas
- Effects to National Forest permittees
- Effects to local communities and Forest Users
- Effects to channel stability from increased water yield
- Effects to soil productivity from surface erosion
- Effects to wildlife and fish, including Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species
- Social effects
- Safety
- Regeneration of new forests in the blowdown
- Effects of salvage logging
- Effects of road construction required to salvage logs
- Visual effects (including those resulting from the need to maintain roughness, shade and structure within a contiguous large area of blowdown)
- Potential that the blowdown material may lead to epidemic levels of insect populations and the effects of such an epidemic

Reviewers Obligations

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 draft Environmental Impact Statements 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 draft Environmental Impact Statement stage but that are 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, 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 draft Environmental Impact Statement 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 draft Environmental Impact Statement 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 Environmental Impact Statement 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.

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 Parts 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 requester 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 name and address within 10 days.

Responsible Official

Jerry E. Schmidt, Forest Supervisor;
Medicine Bow—Routt National Forest;
2468 Jackson Street, Laramie, WY 82070
is the Responsible Official. As the
Responsible Official, I will decide
which, if any of the alternatives to be
described in the draft Environmental
Impact Statement will be implemented.
I will document the decision and the
reasons for my selection of the decision
in the Record of Decision.

Dated: January 14, 1998.

Jerry E. Schmidt,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 98-1324 Filed 1-20-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-GM-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**National Agricultural Statistics Service****Notice of Intent To Request an Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection**

AGENCY: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the National Agricultural Statistics Service's (NASS) intention to request an extension of a currently approved information collection, the Agricultural Prices that expires May 31, 1998.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by March 27, 1998 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Rich Allen, Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 4117 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-2000, (202) 720-4333.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Agricultural Prices.

OMB Number: 0535-0003.

Expiration Date of Approval: May 31, 1998.

Type of Request: To extend a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The primary objective of the National Agricultural Statistics Service is to prepare and issue state and national estimates of crop and livestock production and prices. The Agricultural

Prices surveys provide estimates of prices received by farmers and prices paid for production goods and services needed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These price estimates are used to compute Parity Prices in accordance with requirements of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 as amended (Title III, Subtitle A, Section 301a). In addition, price data are used to administer target price provisions (deficiency payments) of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. The Agricultural Prices Surveys has approval from OMB for a 3-year period. NASS intends to request that the survey be approved for another 3 years.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 11 minutes per response.

Respondents: Individual Job Applicants.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 81,800.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 15,000 hours.

Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained without charge from Larry Gambrell, the Agency OMB Clearance Officer, at (202) 720-5778.

Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, such as through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Larry Gambrell, Agency OMB Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 4162 South Building, Washington, DC, 20250-2000. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Signed at Washington, DC, January 14, 1998.

Rich Allen,

Acting Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

[FR Doc. 98-1301 Filed 1-20-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-20-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**National Agricultural Statistics Service****Notice of Intent To Request an Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection**

AGENCY: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the National Agricultural Statistics Service's (NASS) intention to request an extension of a currently approved information collection, the Fruits, Nuts, and Specialty Crops that expires May 31, 1998.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by March 27, 1998 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Rich Allen, Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 4117, South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250-2000, (202) 720-4333.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Fruits, Nuts, and Specialty Crops.

OMB Number: 0535-0039.

Expiration Date of Approval: May 31, 1998.

Type of Request: To extend a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The primary objective of the National Agricultural Statistics Service is to prepare and issue state and national estimates of crop and livestock production. The Fruits, Nuts, and Specialty Crops survey program collects information on acreage, yield, production, and value of non-citrus fruits and nuts and other specialty crops in states with significant commercial production. The program provides data needed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other government agencies to administer programs and to