

Sawtooth National Recreation Area:
Challis Messenger, Challis, Idaho
 Fairfield District Ranger decisions:
The Times News, Twin Falls, Idaho

Targhee National Forest

Targhee Forest Supervisor decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
 Dubois District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
 Island Park District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
 Ashton District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
 Palisaded District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
 Teton Basin District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho

Uinta National Forest

Uinta Forest Supervisor decisions:
The Daily Herald, Provo, Utah
 Pleasant Grove District Ranger
 decisions:
The Daily Herald, Provo, Utah
 Heber District Ranger decisions:
The Daily Herald, Provo, Utah and
 Spanish Fork District Ranger decisions:
The Daily Herald, Provo, Utah

Wasatch-Cache National Forest

Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor
 decisions:
Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake City,
 Utah
 Salt Lake District Ranger decisions:
Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake City,
 Utah
 Kamas District Ranger decisions:
Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake City,
 Utah
 Evanston District Ranger decisions:
Uintah County Herald, Evanston,
 Wyoming
 Mountain View District Ranger
 decisions:
Uintah County Herald, Evanston,
 Wyoming
 Ogden District Ranger decisions:
Ogden Standard Examiner, Ogden,
 Utah
 Logan District Ranger decisions:
Logan Herald Journal, Logan, Utah
 Dated: June 23, 1999.

Jack A. Blackwell,

Regional Forester.

[FR Doc. 99-16478 Filed 6-28-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on a proposal to thin and regenerate forest stands, construct and reconstruct roads, decommission and obliterate roads, restore and maintain ecosystem function, and use prescribed fire within the Two Bee project area in the Upper McKenzie River drainage. The project area is about 60 miles east of Springfield/Eugene, and is in portions of the Hackleman, Smith, and Browder Creek drainages. The purpose and need for action is to provide timber products from this area as part of the Willamette National Forest annual harvest and to maintain and restore ecosystem function. Harvest and regeneration would provide both short-term and long-term benefits to society in the form of wood fiber and economic opportunity. The project is proposed for fiscal years 2001 and 2002. The Willamette National Forest invites written comment on this proposal and the scope of analysis. The agency will give notice of the full environmental analysis and decision making process for the proposal so interested and affected people may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by August 30, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to John Allen, District Ranger, McKenzie Ranger District, McKenzie Bridge, OR 97413.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Norm Michaels, TwoBee project leader, McKenzie Ranger District, McKenzie Bridge, OR 97413, phone (541) 822-3381.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The USDA, Forest Service Proposed Action is to reintroduce natural fire through the prescribed burning of understory layers in selected stands. Trees will be harvested through commercial thinning, selection harvest, and regeneration harvest on an estimated 1,000 acres, removing about 20 million board feet of timber. There will be permanent roads constructed and temporary roads constructed to access treatment units. There will also be roads repaired and decommissioned or obliterated. This proposed action will continue to develop opportunities for post/pole/chip/firewood products from small-sized trees; and develop habitat improvement projects for a variety of wildlife, fish, and sensitive plant species.

These activities will be consistent with the 1990 Final EIS for the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and the

Willamette Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the 1994 Record of Decision for management of habitat for late-successional and old-growth forest related species within the range of the Northern Spotted Owl. This project will be guided by the recommendations in the Upper McKenzie Watershed Analysis.

The decision-to-be-made will include whether and/or how much harvest should occur, whether and/or which activities should be accomplished to maintain or improve the ecosystem function such as prescribed burning of natural fuels, whether and/or how much road decommissioning, repair, obliteration, or construction should occur, and whether and/or which activities would be appropriate for improvement of habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants.

The project area includes all or portions of T13S, R6E, Sec 25; T13S, R7E, Sec 29, 30, 31, 32; T14S, R6E, Sec 12, 13, 23, 24, 25-28, 34-36; T14S, R7E, Sec 5-8, 17-20, 29-31; T15S, R6E, Sec 1, 2, 11, 12; T14S, R7E, Sec 6.

Preliminary issues have been identified: landscape level pattern and vegetative diversity; stand health and vigor; water quality; proposed endangered; threatened or sensitive species; heritage resources; big game habitat; and recreational activities.

Alternatives to be considered will include the no action alternative, plus action alternatives that will be developed in response to key issues. The action alternatives will include various levels of timber harvest, prescribed fire, road work, and other activities which may be identified.

Initial scoping will begin in June 1999. The public is invited to offer suggestions and comments in writing. Comments received in response to this notice, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available to 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. 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 may be granted in only 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

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TwoBee Landscape Management Project, Willamette National Forest, Lane and Linn Counties, OR

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within a specified number of days.

The draft EIS expected to be completed in April 2000. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date of the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**,

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice at this early stage of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of a 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 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 EIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final EIS 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 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 EIS.

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.)

The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in November 2000. In the final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to comments and responses received during the comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the draft EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making the decision regarding the TwoBee Landscape Management Project.

The Forest Service is the lead agency. John Allen, District Ranger, is the Responsible Official. As the Responsible Official, he will decide whether to implement the project. The Responsible Official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations (36 CFR part 215).

Dated: June 16, 1999.

John Allen,
District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 99-16474 Filed 6-28-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Mining Specifications for Prime Farmland

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final notice.

SUMMARY: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) is issuing specifications for soil handling in relation to mining activities on prime farmland, as provided for in the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA). SMCRA requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish specifications for the removal, storage, replacement, and reconstruction of prime farmland soils.

The Soil Conservation Service, now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service, first proposed these specifications on February 19, 1988 (53 FR 4989). Beginning in 1997, NRCS and the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) began reviewing and updating these specifications to be published as a rule in the **Federal Register**. The process included reviewing comments received from the 1988 **Federal Register**, knowledge gained from field experiences since 1988, and field reviews conducted with state regulatory authorities.

During the process of developing these specifications, we concluded that these specifications should be published through a notice rather than a rule because the specifications are not regulatory. These specifications serve as guidelines to NRCS State Conservationists for developing state-specific specifications and may assist the various states in developing state standards. They will also help the mining industry, state regulatory authority, and OSM develop

reclamation plans, which if implemented, will provide the best opportunity to meet the post-reclamation crop production standards required by SMCRA.

General Background on Proposed Specifications

Section 515(b)(7) of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA), Pub. L. 95-87, 30 U.S.C. 1265(b)(7), authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to establish specifications for soil removal, storage, replacement, and reconstruction for all prime farmlands, as identified in Section 507(b)(16) of the Act 30 U.S.C. 1257(b)(16), to be mined and reclaimed. This authority is delegated to NRCS in 7 CFR 2.61(a)(22).

NRCS determined that national specifications for soil handling must allow for consideration of the wide diversity of soils, geology, climate, mining equipment, and crops in coal mining areas across the nation. These differences are recognized in the permanent program regulations published by the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, U.S. Department of the Interior, specifically in 30 CFR 823.4(a) which states that "NRCS within each State shall establish specifications for prime farmland soil removal, storage, replacement, and reconstruction."

Accordingly, NRCS developed the specifications set forth in this notice to ensure that local and site-specific factors are considered. Within the individual States, each NRCS State Conservationist will maintain and make available a local version of these specifications that incorporates the general criteria set forth in these specifications and any modifications made for the respective State. To the fullest extent possible, the basic specifications and the applicable modifications for individual States reflect the latest scientific information and experience regarding reclamation techniques.

During the development of these specifications, NRCS' national office provided certain general guidelines to assist the NRCS State staffs in developing specifications at the local level. These guidelines were set out in the advance notice of the proposed rule published on August 26, 1985 (50 FR 34490). The first version of these proposed specifications was published on February 19, 1988 (53 FR 4989). The specifications set forth in this notice reflect comments received as a result of the 1988 publication and include technical revisions based on research results and improvements in