

ADDRESSES: Send correspondence to Jack Haddox, Teton Basin Ranger District, PO Box 777, Driggs, Idaho 83422.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions concerning this revised Notice of Intent the proposed action and the EIS should be directed to Patty Bates, Teton Basin District Ranger, Targhee National Forest, Telephone: (208) 354-2312.

Dated: July 23, 1999.

Jerry B. Reese,

Forest Supervisor, Targhee National Forest, Intermountain Region, USDA Forest Service.
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BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

South Pyramid Timber Sales, Willamette National Forest, Linn County, Oregon

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) on a proposal to harvest timber, regenerate harvested lands, construct or reconstruct forest roads, and associated mitigation projects in the South Pyramid subwatershed. The legal description for the planning area is T12S, R5E, sections 19, 28-34. The planning area is approximately 4,637 acres in the Middle Santiam Watershed.

The planning area is primarily designated Matrix-General Forest by the Northwest Forest Plan, with Riparian Reserves, Late Successional Reserve, and Matrix-Special Habitat Areas composing the rest of the landbase. The planning area includes many acres of overstocked 90-150 year forest, where growth rates have slowed. Information and analyses created during the Middle Santiam Watershed Analysis will also be considered when designing this project. This proposal is tentatively scheduled for implementation in fiscal year 2000-2003. The Willamette National Forest invites written comments and suggestions on the scope of this analysis, in addition to those comments received as a result of local public participation activities. The agency will also give notice of the full environmental analysis and decision making process so that interested and affected people are informed as to how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope and implementation of the analysis should be received in writing by August 16, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Please send written comments and suggestions concerning the South Pyramid Timber Sales to Mike Rassbach, District Ranger, Sweet Home Ranger District, Willamette National Forest, 3225 Hwy 20, Sweet Home, Oregon 97386.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the Proposed Action and scope of analysis should be directed to Brian McGinley, Resource Planner, Sweet Home Ranger District, Willamette National Forest, 3225 Highway 22, Sweet Home, Oregon 97386, phone 541-367-5168.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Northwest Forest Plan has designed most of the forest's timber production capability to come from Matrix-General Forest lands. The purpose and need for this proposal is to improve tree growth rates and/or quality of overstocked matrix forests, and harvest timber in a landbase that is Matrix Land-General Forest, where timber management is a dominant resource objective. The Forest Service proposal will comply with the 1990 Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan.

This Proposed Action will consider regeneration harvest and/or commercial thinnings to meet project goals, and will compare conventional logging systems with helicopter logging. This project is expected to yield a volume of 4.0 to 4.4 million board feet, part of which will be achieved by thinning at least 40 acres of forest stands to improve growth rates reduced by overstocking. Other activities being considered are likely to involve: reforestation, managed standard improvements, road closures and obliteration, wildlife habitat enhancement, and noxious weed control.

Preliminary resources issues identified that will influence alternatives developed for this project are: old growth habitat retention; maintenance of large, unroaded landscape blocks; economic and biologic effects of logging systems; and northern spotted owl dispersal habitat. Other issues that will be addressed through project design are: edge effects of management on a neighboring Late Successional Reserve, big game habitat conditions, and habitat connectivity with adjacent watersheds.

Alternative have been developed around the Proposed Action addressing the dominant issues and will be

compared to the "No Action" Alternative. One action alternative focuses on harvesting the least number of acres and staying out of the unroaded landscape blocks. To achieve project goals, this alternative proposes to regeneration harvest 77 acres (47 acres of which are old growth habitat) and thin 48 acres. Conventional skyline and tractor logging systems will be used. This alternative will require 1.1 miles of new road construction and the obliteration of 0.6 miles of road.

A second action alternative focuses on preserving old growth habitat and avoiding regeneration harvesting or road construction within large unroaded landscape blocks. Because only thinning is proposed, this alternative requires 287 acres (209 acres of which lies within the Pyramids unroaded landscape block) to meet project objectives. Helicopter logging will be used for most units, with only 0.8 miles of new road needed and the obliteration of 0.8 miles of road.

A third action alternative tries to balance the desires of preserving old growth and maintaining large, unroaded landscape blocks by regeneration harvesting 39 acres (23 acres of which is old growth habitat) and thinning 161 acres outside or around the edge of the Pyramids landscape block. This alternative proposes to construct 1.2 miles of new road and the obliteration of 0.6 miles of road.

The decisions to be made from the information and analysis include: number and location of harvest units; silvicultural prescriptions for each harvest unit; logging and transportation systems to access units; priorities of mitigation projects; selection of monitoring needs around this project.

Initial scoping began in November 1997. The forest Service will be seeking additional input and comments from other agencies, organizations and individuals who may be interested or affected by the proposed project. Additional input will be helpful in identifying resource issues not currently identified, and in developing alternatives for a draft EIS.

Comments received in response to this notice, 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 a specified number of days.

The scoping process included; identification of potential issues; identification of key issues to be analyzed in depth; exploration of additional alternatives based on identified issues from the scoping process; and identification of potential environmental effects from analyzed alternatives.

The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and will be available for public review by September 1999. The comment period for the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, a reviewer 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 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 in 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 by January 2000. In the final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to substantive comments and responses received during the comment period that pertains to the environmental consequences discussed in the draft EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making the decision regarding this proposal. The Forest Service is the lead agency for this EIS. The responsible official is Mike Rassbach, District Ranger. As a responsible official, he will document the South Pyramid Timber Sales decision and rationale in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations (36 CFR Part 215).

Dated: July 22, 1999.

Mike Rassbach,

Sweet Home District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 99-19676 Filed 7-30-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Housing Service

Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: The Rural Housing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed collection; comments requested.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Rural Housing Service's intention to request an extension for a currently approved information collection in support of the program for Prepayment and Displacement Prevention of Multiple Family Housing Loans.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by October 1, 1999 to be assured of consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Cynthia Reese-Foxworth, Senior Loan Officer, Office of Rural Housing Preservation, Multi-Family Housing Portfolio Management Division, Rural Housing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ag Box 0782, Washington, DC 20250, Telephone (202) 720-1940.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: 7 CFR 1965-E, "Prepayment and Displacement Prevention of Multiple Family Housing Loans".

OMB Number: 0575-0155.

Expiration Date of Approval: December 31, 1999.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The Rural Housing Service (RHS) is authorized under section 514, 515, 516 and 521 of Title V of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, to provide loans and grants to eligible recipients for the development of rural rental housing. Such multiple family housing projects are intended to meet the housing needs of persons or families have with low-to moderate-incomes, senior citizens, the handicapped, and domestic farm laborers.

RHS has the responsibility of assuring the public that the housing projects financed are owned and operated as mandated by Congress. RD Instruction 1965-E was issued to insure proper servicing actions are accomplished for projects financed with multiple family housing loan and grant funds. Minimal requirements have been established as deemed necessary to assure that applicable laws and authorities are carried out as intended and to improve the Agency's ability to assure the continued availability of the facilities financed under RHS multiple housing programs to eligible users.

Without the provisions of this regulation, RHS would be unable to provide the necessary guidance to the RHS field staff to assist borrowers in processing servicing actions affecting their projects. RHS also would not be able to quickly respond to servicing requests from borrowers, initiate servicing actions or establish a uniform procedure for processing such requests from borrowers. RHS must be able to assure Congress and the general public that all projects financed with multiple family housing funds will be maintained for the purposes for which they are intended and for the benefit of those they are mandated to serve.

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 required that rural rental housing borrowers wishing to prepay their RHS financed loans must be offered a fair incentive to not prepay the loan when RHS makes the decision that the housing continues to be needed to serve low-and moderate-income tenants. If the borrower rejects the incentive, the housing must be offered for sale to a nonprofit organization or public agency. Prepayment can only be accepted if RHS decided there is no need for the housing or if no nonprofit