

This action is not a rule as defined by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 601–612) and thus is exempt from the provisions of that Act.

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. § 3507), no new recordkeeping or reporting requirements have been included that are subject to approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

This action is exempted from review by the Office of Management and Budget under Executive Order 12866.

National School Lunch, School Breakfast and Special Milk Programs are listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.555, No. 10.553 and No. 10.556, respectively, and are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. (See 7 CFR Part 3015, Subpart V, and the final rule related notice published at 48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983.)

Authority: Sections 4, 8, 11 and 17A of the National School Lunch Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1753, 1757, 1759a, 1766a and sections 3 and 4(b) of the Child Nutrition Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1772 and 42 U.S.C. 1773(b).

Dated: June 21, 2000.

Samuel Chambers, Jr.,
Administrator.

[FR Doc. 00–16168 Filed 6–26–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–30–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Information Collection; Request for Comments; Timber Sale Operating Plans

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Forest Service announces its intention to extend a previously approved information collection. The collected information will help the Forest Service facilitate contract administration of timber sales on timber on National Forest System lands. Information will be collected from purchasers of this timber.

DATES: Comments must be received in writing on or before August 28, 2000.

ADDRESSES: All comments should be addressed to Rex Baumbach, Forest Management, Mail Stop 1105, Forest Service, USDA, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090–6090.

Comments also may be submitted via facsimile to (202) 205–1045 or by email to rbaumbach@fs.fed.us.

The public may inspect comments received in the Office of the Director, Forest Management Staff, Forest Service, USDA, Room 3NW, Yates Building, 201 14th Street, SW., Washington, D.C. Callers are urged to call ahead to facilitate entrance into the building.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rex Baumbach, Timber Sale Contract Administration Specialist, Forest Management, at (202) 205–0855.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 472a(14)(c)) requires timber sale purchasers to provide the Forest Service with timber sale operating plans on timber sales with contracts that exceed 2 years in length. The timber sale operating plans are collected within 60 days following the award of timber sale contracts and annually, thereafter, until the timber has been harvested. The timber sale contract requires the timber sale purchaser to update the timber sale operating plan annually.

Description of Information Collection

The following describes the information collection to be extended:

Title: Timber Operating Plans.

OMB Number: 0596–0086.

Expiration Date of Approval: May 31, 2000.

Type of Request: Extension of an information collection previously approved by the Office of Management and Budget.

Abstract: The collected information is used by the agency to plan the agency's timber sale contract administration workload and to determine whether a timber sale purchaser's scheduled timber operation has been delayed and is, therefore, eligible for an extension of the contract termination date. The collected information also is used to facilitate the administration of a timber sale contract.

Timber sale purchasers provide information that includes planned periods of major activity, how the activity will be conducted, and any anticipated road construction. The timber sale purchaser also outlines time frames and methods of accomplishing road construction, timber harvesting, and other contract requirements.

There is no prescribed format for the collection of this information. Timber sale purchasers may submit the required information in the form of a chart or

letter using surface mail, electronic mail, or via facsimile. The information is based on the timber sale purchaser's business plan.

Respondents are National Forest System timber sale purchasers who prepare a chart or letter within 60 days of a timber sale contract award and annually thereafter, until the contract has been completed.

Data gathered in this information collection are not available from other sources.

Estimate of Annual Burden: 30 minutes.

Type of Respondents: Purchasers of National Forest System timber.

Estimated Annual Number of Respondents: 2500.

Estimated Annual Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.5.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 1,875 hours.

Comment Is Invited

The agency invites comments on (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes and the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical or scientific 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 respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Use of Comments

All comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses when provided, will become a matter of public record. Comments will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval.

Dated: June 15, 2000.

Paul Brouha,

Associate Deputy Chief, NFS.

[FR Doc. 00–16211 Filed 6–26–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–U

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Eldorado National Forest, CA; Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA Forest Service.

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

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for resource management activities, including road construction, road reconstruction, biomass removal, understory thinning, prescribed burning and wildlife habitat improvement work on the Airport Forest Health Project involving a total planning area size of about 11,000 acres on the Pacific Ranger District of the Eldorado National Forest. The agency invites written comments and suggestions on the analysis. The agency also gives notice of the full environmental analysis and decision-making process that will occur on the proposal so that interested and affected people are aware of how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Scoping and subsequent environmental analysis began on the Airport Forest Health Project in January 1998. Scoping was completed and an environmental assessment (EA) was published and made available to the public in March 2000. Based upon environmental analysis and public comments to the environmental assessment, the Forest Supervisor of the Eldorado National Forest has determined that an environmental impact statement is the appropriate environmental document for this project.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments and suggestions concerning the analysis to Don Errington, Pacific Ranger Station, Pollock Pines, California, 95726.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the proposed action and EIS should be directed to Don Errington, Pacific Ranger Station, Pollock Pines, California, 95726, Phone (530) 644-2349.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan was completed in January 1989. The Airport Forest Health Project EIS will tier to the approved Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. There are no known permits or licenses required to implement the proposed action.

Public comments previously received during scoping and in response to the completed environmental assessment will be considered in preparing the Final EIS. The Forest Service will identify and consider a range of alternatives for this project. The proposed alternatives will include the following:

1. No Action;
2. Understory thinning on approximately 180 acres and follow-up fuels reduction immediately around public use developments and public use areas using ground based equipment;
3. Understory thinning on approximately 2,200 acres and follow-up fuels reduction around public use developments and public use areas and other selected areas using ground based equipment; and
4. Understory thinning on approximately 2,900 acres and fuels reduction around public use developments and public use areas and on other selected areas using ground based and helicopter equipment.

These alternatives will consider varying levels and distribution of vegetative manipulation, timber harvest and fuels management. Specified new road construction will vary by alternative (0.1 miles in Alternative 2 and 2.2 miles in Alternatives 3 and 4). Road reconstruction will vary by alternative (0.3 miles in Alternative 2 and 18.2 miles in Alternatives 3 and 4). Road reconstruction will include road rocking, surface drainage work, clearing and minor realignment. Harvest prescriptions will include understory removal of both merchantable and sub-merchantable trees and commercial thinning of merchantable trees. All harvest prescriptions will conform with the California Spotted Owl Sierran Province Interim Guidelines Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice. Volume estimates of timber to be harvested range from 0 to 11 million boardfeet of commercial sawtimber. Biomass removal estimates range from 0 to 40,000 tons. Post-harvest herbicide use is proposed on 180 acres to help achieve reforestation of understocked areas. All estimates will be dependent on which alternative is chosen.

Preliminary issues that have been identified during the environmental analysis process include:

1. The concern that valuable developments may be destroyed by wildfire.
2. The concern that public recreational experiences may be affected by catastrophic fire or project activities.
3. The concern that healthy, functioning watersheds may be impacted by wildfire or selected treatments.
4. The concern that the socioeconomic well-being of local communities may be affected by wildfire.
5. The concern that the project may not be economically viable.

6. The concern that late seral habitat may be affected by project activities or wildfire.

7. The concern that air quality may be adversely affected by project activities or wildfire.

8. The concern that cultural resources may be adversely affected by project activities or wildfire.

9. The concern that herbicide use may adversely affect the environment.

10. The concern that road reconstruction, construction or decommissioning may cause undesirable environmental effects.

11. The concern that meadows are being invaded by conifer species and could be damaged by wildfire.

Public participation is especially important at several points during the analysis. The first point is during the scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7). The Forest Service has sought information, comments, and assistance from federal, state and local agencies and other individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed project.

John Berry, Forest Supervisor, Eldorado National Forest, is the responsible official. The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by August, 2000. At that time, EPA will publish a notice of availability of the draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date that EPA's notice of availability appears 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, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposals 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 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.

After the comment period ends on the draft EIS, the comments will be analyzed and considered by the Forest Service in preparing the final EIS. Comments previously received in response to the Airport Forest Health Project environmental assessment will be considered in the Final EIS. In the Final EIS the Forest Service is required to respond to the comments and responses received (40 CFR 1503.4). The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed by September, 2000. The responsible official will consider the comments, responses, and environmental consequences discussed in the Final EIS; and applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making a decision regarding this project. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.

Dated: June 20, 2000.

John Berry,

Forest Supervisor, Eldorado National Forest.
[FR Doc. 00-16171 Filed 6-26-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Oil and Gas Leasing, Finger Lakes National Forest, Seneca and Schuyler Counties, NY

AGENCY: USDA Forest Service.

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

SUMMARY: Proponents have requested the Bureau of Land Management Eastern States Office to offer for lease the

Federal oil and gas resources found within the Finger Lakes National Forest. The Mineral Leasing Act for Acquired Lands (Act of August 7, 1947) requires U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service consent prior to the leasing of an acquired mineral estate in National Forest System lands. The Forest Service further has the right to specify terms and conditions under which a lease will be issued to protect the surface resources and to provide for their continued use for other program purposes. The BLM has requested consent from the Forest Service to lease these lands. The 1986 Finger Lakes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan determined that these lands are administratively available for oil and gas leasing with certain stipulations.

The Forest Service and BLM have determined that an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary to assess the environmental impacts that may occur as a result of leasing Federal lands for the exploration, development and production of oil and gas on the Finger Lakes National Forest, and reaffirm the availability decision. The range of potential post-leasing impacts will be based on the Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenario (RFDS).

The decision to be made by the Forest Service is whether or not to provide consent to the Bureau of Land Management to offer National Forest System lands for competitive oil and gas leasing, and identify any stipulations required for protection of surface resources and for access, construction, or use and protection of existing roads. If consent is given, the Bureau of Land Management will use the EIS to make leasing decision on Finger Lake National Forest and split estate lands.

DATES: Written comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received by July 28, 2000 to ensure timely consideration. The Forest Service will also conduct one or more public scoping meetings regarding this leasing proposal. The public will be notified as to the date, time and location of these meetings as they are scheduled.

ADDRESSES: Please send written comments to: Martha Twarkins, District Ranger, Finger Lakes National Forest, 5218 State Route 414, Hector, New York 14841

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Contact Martha Twarkins either by writing to her at the Finger Lakes National Forest, 5218 State Route 414, Hector, New York 14841 or by telephone at (607) 546-4470 Ext: 314 if you have questions about the project and the preparation of the EIS or if you

would like to be on the mailing list for this project.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The project area is located within Seneca and Schuyler Counties of New York. It encompasses approximately 16,176 acres of the Finger Lakes National Forest. There are also private lands where the United States owns the mineral rights, except gold and silver (split estate land). These lands encompass 47.35 acres, more or less, and will also be considered for leasing and will be analyzed as part of the project area.

The RFDS includes a reasonable projection of post-lease oil and gas development for each alternative. This projection includes potential number of wells, production facilities and equipment, acres disturbed, and typical operations. These reasonable foreseeable post-leasing activities will be used to assess potential impacts associated with leasing Federal oil and gas resources on the Finger Lakes National Forest.

The 1986 Finger Lakes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan determined that these public and private lands are administratively available for oil and gas leasing with certain stipulations. Typical restrictions found in the Forest Plan include no surface occupancy: (1) On open water, streams and riparian areas; (2) on wet, steep, and shallow soils; (3) on municipal watersheds; (4) on administrative sites; (5) on range; (6) on or within 200 feet of designated trails; (7) on developed recreational areas; (8) on Special Areas (Management Area 8.1); and (9) on lands within Management Area 9.2. There are no outstanding oil and gas mineral rights or mineral withdrawals.

Public participation has been and will be an integral component of the study process, and will be especially important at several points during the analysis. The first is during the scoping process. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments and assistance from federal, state county and local agencies, individuals and organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed activities. Initial public scoping was held on March 3, 1999 and April 13, 1999, and an open house was held on May 18, 1999. Preliminary issues identified for analysis in the EIS include the potential effects on: (1) Threatened, endangered and sensitive species; including the Federally-listed Indiana bat, Henslow's sparrow, and grasshopper sparrow; (2) grazing; (3) surface and groundwater, including the cumulative effects to the Forest's watersheds; (4) heritage