

This proposal includes construction of approximately 19 miles of new roads. Research studies are proposed as a part of the South Deep Management Project in conjunction with the University of Washington, Washington State University, the University of Idaho, and the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station. Studies concerning soil compaction, erosion, sedimentation resulting from active stream corridor treatments, silviculture, harvesting systems, and use of a computerized landscape management system are included in the project design.

The project would be located approximately 15 miles northeast of Colville, Washington, along the Aladdin Highway. The South Deep Management Project is proposed within the South Deep Creek, Little Smackout Creek, Meadow Creek, Rocky Creek, Kolle Creek, Clinton Creek, Rogers Creek, Kenny Creek, and Scott Creek subwatershed on the Three Rivers Ranger District. This analysis will evaluate a range of alternatives for implementation of the project activities. The area being analyzed is approximately 38,300 acres, of which 29,740 acres are National Forest System lands. The other ownership areas are included only for analysis of effects. The project area does not include any wilderness, RARE II, or other inventoried roadless land.

The preliminary issues that have been identified include: water quality and watershed restoration; forest stand density; uses of unroaded areas; forest road management and maintenance; and soil stabilization. A range of alternatives will be considered, including a no-action alternative.

Initial scoping began in October, 1998. The scoping process will include the following: identify and clarify issues; identify key issues to be analyzed in depth; explore alternatives based on themes which will be derived from issues recognized during scoping activities; and identify potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives. The Forest Service is seeking information, comments, and assistance from other agencies, organizations, Indian Tribes, and individuals who may be interested in or affected by the Proposed Action. This input will be used in preparation of the draft EIS. Your comments are appreciated throughout the analysis process.

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 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. 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 draft EIS is to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by September, 2002. The 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 the EPA notice appears in the **Federal Register**. At that time, copies of the draft EIS will be distributed to interested and affected agencies, organizations, Indian Tribes, and members of the public for their review and comment.

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 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 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 EIS. 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 available by December, 2002. In the final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to substantive comments received during the comment period for the draft EIS. The Responsible Official is Colville National Forest Supervisor, Nora Rasure. She will decide which, if any, of the alternatives will be implemented. Her decision and rationale for the decision will be documented in the Record of Decision, which will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations (36 CFR part 215).

Dated: December 17, 2001.

Nora B. Rasure,
Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Trout-West Fuels Reduction Project, Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Teller, Douglas and El Paso Counties, Colorado

AGENCY: Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA-FS).

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

SUMMARY: The USDA-FS will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze and disclose the potential impacts of a site-specific proposal to reduce hazardous fuels on National Forest Lands in the Trout-West area. Management direction guiding the proposed project is contained within the 1984 Pike and San Isabel National Forests; Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan, and the 2000 National Fire Plan. The National Fire Plan identified Woodland Park, Colorado as an urban interface community at risk from catastrophic wildfire. The proposed project is intended to decrease the threat of

wildfire to Woodland Park and surrounding communities by reducing hazardous fuels within the urban interface and municipal watershed. Approximately 32,000 acres are proposed for treatment. This proposal is scheduled for implementation for ten years following the issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD), approximately 2003 to 2013.

DATES: Issues and comments concerning the Proposed Action must be received in writing before February 8, 2002. Correspondence should be addressed to Rochelle Desser, Trout West Team Leader, 201 Caves Highway, Cave Junction, OR 97523.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rochelle Desser in Oregon at 541-592-4075 (rdesser@fs.fed.us) or Bob Post at Fairplay, Colorado, 719-836-2031, (bpost@fs.fed.us). Information about the project will be posted on the Pike-San Isabel National Forest Web site: (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/pp/>).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Trout and West Creek Watersheds contain approximately 137,990 acres, located within all or parts of T.9S, R.68W; T.9S, R.69W; T.9S, R.70W; / T.10S, R.68W; T.10S, R.69W; T.10S, R.70W; / T.11S, R.68W; T.11S, R.69W; T.11S, R.70W; T.11S, R.71W; / T.12S, R.68W; T.12S, R.69W; T.12S, R.70W; T.12S, R.71W; / T.13S, R.69W; T.13S, R.70W. The analysis area boundary is bordered to the north by Devils Head Peak and a ridge between Ruby and Bridge Gulch, the eastern boundary is the Rampart Range Road, the southern boundary is bordered by Raspberry Mountain, and the western boundary is just west along County Road 51 to County Road 3 and following north to the west side of Sheepnose Mountain and Thunder Butte connecting at the confluence of Trout and West creek.

The Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action is to decrease the threat of wildfire to Woodland Park and neighboring communities by reducing hazardous fuels within the urban interface and adjacent National Forest lands. Project goals include promoting sustainable forest conditions; encouraging aspen regeneration; reducing risk of erosion and sediment to streams; maintaining municipal water quality; maintaining quality of life; and meeting Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines.

A mix of fuel treatments is proposed across seven project areas within the Trout and West Creek Watersheds including thinning, machine and hand slash piling, and prescribed burning. Private land including developed subdivisions occurs within the seven

project areas, however only National Forest within these project areas is considered for treatment. These treatments are intended to reduce the canopy closure, continuity and overall biomass to create more moderate fire behavior if a wildfire were to start in the area.

Some of the trees that need to be cut may be sold as fuel wood, Christmas trees, post and poles, and/or saw logs; however, many areas are not expected to yield a commercial byproduct.

The EIS will analyze the potential effects of the Proposed Action on physical, biological, and social issues including ecosystem health, fuel loading and fire risk, soil and water, air quality, species viability, noxious weeds, cultural resources, and economics. Additional issues may be identified through the scoping process. The Forest Service will develop alternatives to respond to significant issues with the Proposed Action. A no action alternative will be considered.

Public participation is important throughout the analysis. The first time is during the scoping period, when the Forest Service invites input from Federal, State, and local agencies, Indian tribes, and other individuals who may be interested in or affected by the Proposed Action. Please refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environment Policy Act at 40 CFR 1501.7 for more information about scoping.

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and be available for review June 2002. A comment period for the Draft EIS will be 45 days from the date that the EPA published the Notice of Availability for appears 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, a reviewer of a Draft EIS must structure their participation in the environmental review process of the proposal so that it is specific, 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 60-day comment period so that substantive comments and objectives are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider and respond to them in the final EIS. Please refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environment Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 for more information about how to comment on the upcoming EIS.

After the 60-day comment period ends on the draft EIS, comments will be considered and analyzed by the Agency in preparing the final EIS. The final EIS is scheduled for completion by September 2002. In the final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to substantive comments and responses during the comment period.

The Responsible Official for this project is the Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands National Forest Supervisor. The Responsible Official will document the decision and rationale in a Record of Decision (scheduled for November 2002). The Forest Service decision will be subject to appeal under regulations at 36 CFR 215.

Dated: December 10, 2001.

William A. Wood,

Deputy Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Columbia County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC)

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committees Act (Pub. L. 92-463), the Southeast Washington Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will meet on January 23, 2002 in Pomeroy, Washington. The purpose of the meeting is to meet as a Committee for the first time and to discuss the selection of Title II projects under Public Law 106-393, H.R. 2389, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, also called the "Payments to States" Act.

DATES: The meeting will be held on January 23, 2002 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Forest Service office located at 71