

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service**

[Docket No. 03-042-1]

Notice of Request for Extension of Approval of an Information Collection**AGENCY:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Extension of approval of an information collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's intention to request an extension of approval of an information collection in support of regulations for the use of irradiation as a phytosanitary treatment for fruits and vegetables imported into the United States.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before July 14, 2003.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by postal mail/commercial delivery or by e-mail. If you use postal mail/commercial delivery, please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to: Docket No. 03-042-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 03-042-1. If you use e-mail, address your comment to regulations@aphis.usda.gov. Your comment must be contained in the body of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and address in your message and "Docket No. 03-042-1" on the subject line.

You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information regarding regulations for the use of irradiation as a phytosanitary

treatment for fruits and vegetables imported into the United States, contact Dr. Inder P. Gadh, Import Specialist, Phytosanitary Issues Management Team, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 Road Unit 140, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 734-5210. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Mrs. Celeste Sickles, APHIS' Information Collection Coordinator, at (301) 734-7477.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Irradiation Phytosanitary Treatment for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.

OMB Number: 0579-0155.

Type of Request: Extension of approval of an information collection.

Abstract: The Plant Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 7701-7772) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to regulate the importation of plants, plant products, and other articles into the United States to prevent the introduction of plant pests and noxious weeds.

The regulations in 7 CFR part 319 include specific requirements for the importation of fruits and vegetables. For example, fruits and vegetables from certain regions of the world must be treated for insect pests in order to be eligible for entry into the United States.

The regulations in 7 CFR part 305 provide for the use of irradiation as a phytosanitary treatment for certain fruits and vegetables imported into the United States. The irradiation treatment provides protection against 11 species of fruit flies and the mango seed weevil. It may be used as an alternative to other approved treatments for these pests in fruits and vegetables, such as fumigation, cold treatment, heat treatment, and other techniques.

This collection requires the submission of a compliance agreement, 24-hour notification, labeling requirements, dosimetry recordings, requests for dosimetry device approval, recordkeeping, requests for facility approval, trust fund agreement, and annual work plan.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve our use of these information collection activities for an additional 3 years.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning our information collection. These comments will help us:

(1) Evaluate 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;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical, and other collection technologies; e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.0825093 hours per response.

Respondents: Foreign plant protection services, irradiation facility personnel, importers.

Estimated annual number of respondents: 125.

Estimated annual number of responses per respondent: 999.16.

Estimated annual number of responses: 124,895.

Estimated total annual burden on respondents: 10,305 hours. (Due to averaging, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the reporting burden per response.)

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.

Done in Washington, DC, this 12th day of May, 2003.

Peter Fernandez,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 03-12166 Filed 5-14-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service**

Alaska Region, (R-10), Chugach National Forest, Glacier and Seward Ranger Districts, Commercially Guided Helicopter Skiing

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The Chugach National Forest proposes to authorize a 5-year special use permit to Chugach Powder Guides, Inc. (CPG) for guided helicopter skiing on National Forest lands on the Kenai Peninsula near Girdwood and Seward, Alaska. Guided helicopter skiing would be permitted on 13 zones totaling 342,700 acres on the Glacier and Seward

Ranger Districts. The season of use would be from approximately December 15 through April 20. Three helicopters would be used and 2,400 client days would be authorized.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by June 6, 2003. The draft environmental impact statement is expected in July 2003 and the final environmental impact statement is expected in September 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Teresa Paquet, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Glacier Ranger District, P.O. Box 129, Girdwood, Alaska 99587-0129, or FAX comments to 907-783-2094, or send by e-mail to: tpaquet@fs.fed.us. For further information contact Teresa Paquet, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Glacier Ranger District, P.O. Box 129, Girdwood, Alaska 99587-0129.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Teresa Paquet, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Glacier Ranger District, P.O. Box 129, Girdwood, Alaska 99587-0129.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

The Forest Service is responding to a request by a commercial guide service to provide helicopter skiing on the Kenai Peninsula. Chugach National Forest lands on the Kenai Peninsula provide many winter recreational opportunities including snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, ski touring, fixed-wing supported skiing, and helicopter supported skiing. Heli-skiing requires untracked powder snow, several vertical runs per day and a backcountry experience. Many areas on the Kenai have excellent physical characteristics (terrain and snow conditions) for helicopter skiing. There is not enough suitable terrain on private lands to meet this need. The proposed areas are near a major population center, Anchorage, which is needed to support such an operation. This proposal would help meet the public demand for quality, safe, guided helicopter skiing. Guided helicopter skiing would help meet the Chugach National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan's goals to (1) maintain quality settings for motorized recreation opportunities and (2) provide helicopter access for skiing at appropriate locations.

CPG has submitted an application for a 5-year special use permit for outfitting/guiding helicopter skiing on National Forest lands on the Kenai Peninsula, near Girdwood and Seward Alaska. The applicant requested the use of 13 zones (342,700 acres) during the winter ski season (December 15, through April 20). Eight of these zones have

been used by CPG under temporary permits and five are additional exploratory zones. The eight core zones are: Glacier-Winner, West Twentymile, North Twentymile, East Twentymile, Placer-Skookum, Grandview, and Bench Peak. The five exploratory zones are Seattle Creek, Moose Creek, Ptarmigan, Snow River and Mount Ascension. The project area is bordered on the west by the Hope Highway, Seward Highway, and the Forest boundary near Resurrection River, on the north by the Forest boundary, on the east by the divide between the Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound and non-National Forest land, and on the south by the Forest boundary and non-National Forest land.

Proposed Action

The Chugach National Forest proposes to authorize a 5-year special use permit to Chugach Powder Guides, Inc. (CPG) for guided helicopter skiing on National Forest lands on the Kenai Peninsula near Girdwood and Seward, Alaska. Guided helicopter skiing would be permitted on 13 use areas totaling 342,700 acres on the Glacier and Seward Ranger Districts. The season of use would be from approximately December 15 through April 20. Three helicopters would be used and 2,400 client days per season (1,800 core and 600 exploratory) would be authorized.

Possible Alternatives

Alternative 1. No Action.

Alternative 2. Submitted by proponent. 1,800 core clients days 600 exploratory client days. All use areas. All staging areas and 30 cycles (take off and landing) per staging area per day. Timing restrictions in Bench Creek West.

Alternative 3. Proponent's proposal with design features to address noise and user conflicts. 1,800 core and 600 exploratory client days. No use in Seattle Creek West, Moose Creek West and Ptarmigan West. No staging area in Moose Pass. 30 cycles per staging area per day. Timing restriction in Seattle Creek East and Bench Peak West.

Alternative 4. Designed to maintain current helicopter activity. No use in Seattle Creek, Ptarmigan, Moose Creek, Mount Ascension and Snow River. 1,200 client days. No staging areas in Moose Pass. 30 cycles per day per staging area. Timing restrictions in Bench Peak West.

Alternative 5. Designed to minimize user conflicts. 1,800 core and 600 exploratory client days. No use in Seattle Creek West, Seattle Creek East, Moose Creek West, Ptarmigan West, and Bench Peak West. No staging area in

Moose Pass. 30 cycles per staging area per day.

Alternative 6. Designed to minimize noise and social impacts in Moose Pass. 1,800 core and 300 exploratory client days. No use in Moose Creek, Ptarmigan, Bench Peak West, Seattle Creek West, and Seattle Creek East. No staging area in Moose Pass. 30 cycles per staging area per day, except Girdwood Airstrip which would have 20 cycles per day.

Responsible Officials

Michael R. Kania, District Ranger, Seward Ranger District, 334 Fourth Ave., P.O. Box 390, Seward, Alaska 99664-0390; and James M. Fincher, District Ranger, Glacier Ranger District, Forest Station Road, PO Box 129, Girdwood, Alaska 99587-0129.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The decision to be made from this analysis is whether or not to issue a 5-year permit to Chugach Powder Guides for helicopter skiing on the Glacier and Seward Ranger Districts, and if so, for what areas, for what period of time and with what restrictions.

Scoping Process

Public Involvement was initiated in September 2002 with the Chugach National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions. On October 31, 2002, a letter describing the proposed action and seeking public comment was mailed to over 800 interested individuals, businesses and environmental groups. Public meetings, to share information and gather comments regarding the proposal, were held at Seward and Moose Pass on November 22, 2002, and at Hope and Girdwood on December 12, 2002. Additional public meetings, to share information and gather comments regarding draft Alternatives were held at Moose Pass on April 29, 2003, Seward on April 30, 2003, and at Hope and Girdwood on May 1, 2003.

Preliminary Issues

1. Wildlife. Helicopter operations and skiing activities can disturb wildlife. Factors include the distance to disturbance, sensitivity of individual species to noise and level of habituation. Excessive disturbance can cause harm to overall health, growth rates and reproductive success. Some of the species with the greatest potential to be impacted in the permit area are brown bear, wolverine, mountain goat, and Dall sheep.

2. Impacts on communities. Lifestyles of rural community residents can be negatively impacted by increases in permitted recreation activities either

incrementally over a number of years or by sudden increases in the number of helicopter trips. The noise of helicopters during flights could affect the quality of life for residents in the following areas: Girdwood, Sunrise, Moose Pass, and Seward.

3. *Impacts to recreationists.* Heli-skiing activities could negatively impact backcountry ground-based recreationists' experience by helicopter noise disturbance, increasing avalanche hazards and their sudden presence in areas that ground-based recreationists have expended effort to reach.

4. *Wilderness recommendations.* Permitted landings in roadless areas could affect future Wilderness recommendations.

5. *Wildlife cumulative effects.* Cumulative effects of various recreation activities (motorized and non-motorized) can have detrimental effects on wildlife use of habitat in alpine areas.

Permits or Licenses Required

USDA Forest Service Special Use Permit.

Comment Requested

This notice of intent continues the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement. Comments specific to the proposal and draft Alternatives are being sought.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review: A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability 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 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 June 6, 2003, 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, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21)

Dated: May 5, 2003.

Gerald F. Xavier,

Acting Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 03-11871 Filed 5-14-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Idaho—Quartz Gold Project EIS

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement on a proposal of ecosystem management in the Quartz Gold project area, which is approximately 44,000 acres in size. Opportunities were developed through a comparison of existing project area conditions with desired future conditions for all the resources in the project area. The assessment utilized the Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan and findings from the St. Joe Geographic Assessment,

Upper Columbia River Basin Assessment along with trends observed by interdisciplinary specialists conducting on the ground assessments. The proposal improves forest health, wildlife and fisheries habitat, and watershed health. It reduces risks to wildfire, and maintains a spectrum of access for public recreation. The project is intended to move the landscape toward long-term ecologic, economic and social sustainability.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received within 30 days of publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. The draft environmental impact statement is expected to be available for public review in July 2003 and the final environmental impact statement is expected November 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to George Bain, District Ranger, St. Joe Ranger District, PO Box 407, St. Maries, Idaho 83861 or electronically to gbain@fs.fed.us. For further information, mail correspondence to Kimberly Johnson, EIS Team Leader at the address listed above. Information on this project can be found on the Internet by going to <http://www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/> and looking under Ecosystems, Management, Index of NEPA Project and St. Joe Ranger District.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kimberly Johnson, Quartz Gold Project Team Leader, 208-245-6072.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this proposal is to improve forest health by managing vegetative conditions that in the long term encourage more resilient and sustainable forest conditions. It also improves and maintains winter range conditions and white bark pine habitat, which are both declining. It will reduce the risk of resource loss through fuel management and improve growing conditions for sapling/pole stands. The proposal will contribute to watershed recovery processes by correcting sediment sources from the existing road system. Approximately 65% of stream-crossing culverts surveyed are undersized for a 100 year event (as required by Infish). It will also improve instream habitat conditions as several streams in the area are not meeting Infish standards as directed in the Forest Plan and provide fish passage on those road/stream crossing culverts. It will increase wildlife security which is currently below Forest Plan standards and maintain a spectrum of access for public recreation and provide opportunities for disabled hunters,