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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Oregon; Powder River Watershed Mining Plans

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) to process and respond to the mining Plans of Operations within the Powder River Watershed submitted to the Whitman Ranger District of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

DATES: Written comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by April 23, 2018. The draft EIS is expected July 2018, and the final EIS is expected December 2018.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments and suggestions to Jeff Tomac, Whitman District Ranger, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, 1550 Dewey Ave., Suite A, Baker City, OR 97814. Comments may also be sent via email to comments-pacificnorthwest-wallowa-whitman-whitmanunit@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sophia Millar, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Whitman Ranger District, 1550 Dewey Ave., Suite A, Baker City, OR 97814, Phone: (541) 263-1735.

Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Per the General Mining Law of 1872, the miner is entitled to conduct operations that are reasonably incident to exploration and development of mineral deposits on its mining claims pursuant to applicable U.S. laws and regulations and is

asserting its right under the General Mining Law to develop, mine, and remove the mineral deposit subject to regulatory laws.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for action is to (1) respond to the proposed Plans of Operations (Plans) to conduct mining activities within the Powder River watershed; (2) ensure that the selected alternative, where feasible, would minimize adverse environmental impacts on National Forest System (NFS) surface resources; and (3) ensure that measures would be included that provide for reclamation of the surface disturbance.

Proposed Action

The Powder River Watershed Mining Plans analysis area is located on the Whitman Ranger District of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, approximately 14 miles southwest of Baker City, Oregon. The decision area will cover 22 proposed mining Plans within the Powder River Watershed, an analysis area encompassing approximately 126,831 acres of NFS lands in Baker County. Typically, each project would disturb and reclaim an area of approximately 1–10 acres annually.

This EIS will evaluate each of the 22 Plans and propose additional operational requirements for some or all of the Plans. The final Record of Decision (ROD) would identify which Plans will be approved, and any specific Plans that require further action prior to Plan approval.

Once the ROD is signed and issued, reclamation bonds and any 401 certifications deemed necessary to be consistent with the Clean Water Act would be presented to the Forest Service before the Plans are approved. PACFISH (which amended the WWNF Forest Plan in 1995) Minerals Management standard #1 requires a reclamation plan and reclamation bond for mineral operations in riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAAs).

Responsible Official

The Whitman District Ranger, Jeff Tomac, will be the responsible official for making the decision and providing direction for the analysis.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The responsible official will decide whether or not to move forward with approving specific mining Plans within the Powder River Watershed Mining Plans analysis area. The responsible official will also decide whether or not to select the proposed action as stated or modified, or to select an alternative to it; any mitigation measures needed; and any monitoring that may be required.

Preliminary Issues

The interdisciplinary team has conducted field surveys and data research to identify preliminary issues of concern with this proposal. The primary concern is the potential for sediment or heavy metal discharges into streams from mining operations, potentially impacting water quality, and Endangered Species Act-listed bull trout and bull trout habitat (pools and temperature). Based on these preliminary issues and the level of activity proposed at some sites, there is the potential for significant impacts to some resources, therefore an EIS fits the scope of this analysis rather than an Environmental Assessment.

Scoping Process

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process, which guides the development of the EIS. Public participation is especially important at several points during the development of the EIS. The Forest Service is seeking information, comments, and coordination with Federal, State, and local agencies, and tribal governments, individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. The most useful comments to developing or refining the proposed action would be site-specific concerns and those that pertain to authorizing mining activities within the Powder River Watershed Mining Plans analysis area that meet the purpose of and need for action.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such manner that they are useful to the agency's preparation of the EIS. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action and will be available for public inspection.

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

Dated: February 16, 2018.

Glenn P. Casamassa,
Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Information Collection: Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP)

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; request for comment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Forest Service is seeking comments from all interested individuals and organizations on the renewal of the *Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP)* information collection.

DATES: Comments must be received in writing on or before May 22, 2018 to be assured of consideration. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: Comments concerning this notice should be addressed to Erika Svendsen, USDA Forest Service, NYC Urban Field Station, 431 Walter Reed Rd., Bayside, NY 11359. Comments also may be submitted by email to esvendsen@fs.fed.us. Please put "Comments re: STEW-MAP" in the subject line. Comments submitted in response to this notice may be made available to the public through relevant websites and upon request. For this reason, please do not include in your comments information of a confidential nature, such as sensitive personal information or proprietary information. If you send an email comment, your email address will be automatically captured and included as part of the comment that is placed in the public docket and made available on the internet. Please note that responses to this public comment request containing any routine notice about the confidentiality of the communication will be treated as public comments that may be made available to the public

notwithstanding the inclusion of the routine notice.

The public may inspect the comments received at USDA Forest Service, USDA Forest Service, NYC Urban Field Station, 431 Walter Reed Rd., Bayside, NY 11359 during normal business hours. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to 718-225-3061 to facilitate entry to the building. The public may request an electronic copy of the draft supporting statement and/or any comments received be sent via return email. Requests should be emailed to esvendsen@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Erika Svendsen at 718-225-3061 x301. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year, including holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Information Collection Clearance for the Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP).

OMB Number: 0596-0240.

Type of Request: Renewal.

Abstract: Local environmental stewardship groups are essential for ensuring the vibrancy of natural areas in cities, suburbs, towns, and rural areas, including National Forest lands and the surrounding areas. Natural areas provide a range of benefits and services including storm water management, air pollution removal, urban heat island mitigation, carbon storage, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, stress reduction, aesthetic beauty, noise reduction, increased property values, and reduced energy use. The work of civic environmental stewards leverages the efforts of local government officials in maintaining these resources, especially in lean budget times. Civic stewardship organizations, including nonprofits, faith-based groups, formal and informal community groups, and coalitions, are often involved in, for example, planting trees, organizing community gardens, offering environment-themed classes, engaging with local officials on behalf of the environment, monitoring plants or animals, and cleaning up nearby parks or natural areas. People who do this work are stewards of their local environments, even if they do not normally use the word "steward" or think of what they do as "stewardship."

The roles of civic environmental stewards and their levels of engagement and commitment are often not understood by land managers and other decision makers. This means that the valuable services they provide may not

be recognized and built on to full advantage. In addition, stewards themselves may not be aware of others doing similar work in their area so there may be lost opportunities for collaboration between groups.

The purpose of this research is to gather information on civic stewardship groups and their efforts such as where they work, the types of projects they focus on, and how they are organized. This information will be summarized and made publicly available online for use by policy makers, land managers, environmental professionals, the general public, stewards themselves, and other natural resource management stakeholders.

There are three phases to a STEW-MAP project:

- Phase One (Census) is a census of stewardship groups in the target region, generating a master list of known stewardship groups and their contact information.
- Phase Two (Survey) is a survey which is distributed to all of the organizations identified in Phase One to collect information about what they work on, how their group is structured, where they work, and what other groups they collaborate with.
- Phase Three (Follow-Up Interviews) is follow-up interviews with key responding organizations identified during Phase Two to collect more detailed information about the organizations and their histories.

A primary goal of STEW-MAP is to visualize stewardship activities, which can span across the urban to rural landscape. The geographic information provided by stewardship groups on the survey (Phase Two) will allow the researchers to do a spatial analysis of where stewardship groups are working, identify "gaps" where little to no stewardship is being done, and provide locally relevant geographic information like what kinds of stewardship groups are working in particular places. This geographic information will be displayed on maps to show stewards, local land managers, policy makers, and other interested stakeholders how stewardship work is distributed across the region with the goal of encouraging collaboration, building innovative partnerships, increasing organizational capacities, and generally making stewardship efforts more effective.

Information from STEW-MAP will help planners, natural resource decision makers, land managers, and the general public work across property jurisdictions, management regimes and political boundaries to conserve, protect, and manage natural resources effectively. It will also be used to