

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service****Oregon Coast Provincial Advisory Committee****AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Oregon Coast Province Advisory Committee will meet in Corvallis, OR, May 29, 2003. The theme of the meeting is Introduction/Overview/Business Planning. The agenda includes: Orientation of the NW Forest Plan; Set Future Meetings and Topics—Monitoring Field Trip; Lower Siuslaw Sub-Committee Update/Round Robin and Public Input.

DATES: The meeting will be held May 29, 2003, beginning at 9 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the LaSells Stewart Center, 100 LaSells Stewart Center, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon 97331.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joni Quarnstrom, Public Affairs Specialist, Siuslaw National Forest, 541-750-7075, or write to Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor, P.O. Box 1148, Corvallis, OR 97339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meeting is open to the public. Council Discussion is limited to Forest/BLM staff and Council Members. Lunch will be on your own. A public input session will be at 3:15 p.m. for fifteen minutes. The meeting is expected to adjourn around 3:30 p.m.

Dated: May 13, 2003.

George Buckingham,
District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 03-12534 Filed 5-19-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service****Notice of Modoc County RAC Meetings**

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committees Act (Public Law 92-463) and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-393), the Modoc National Forest's Modoc County Resource Advisory Committee will meet Monday, June 9, in Alturas, California. The meetings are open to the public.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The business meeting June 9, begins at 4 p.m., at the Modoc National Forest Office, Conference Room, 800 West 12th St., Alturas. Agenda topics will include approval of May 12 Minutes,

consideration of new projects for funding in 2004, and discuss community outreach for projects for fiscal year 2004 that will improve the maintenance of existing infrastructure, implement stewardship objectives that enhance forest ecosystems, provide economic benefits and restore and improve health and water quality that meet the intent of Public Law 106-393. Time will also be set aside for public comments at the beginning of the meeting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Forest Supervisor Stan Sylva, at (530) 233-8700; or Public Affairs Officer Nancy Gardner at (530) 233-8713.

Stanley G. Sylva,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 03-12533 Filed 5-19-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Natural Resources Conservation Service****Notice of Availability of Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and an Environmental Assessment (EA) consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, to implement the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which is authorized by 16 U.S.C. 3839aa. Upon review of the analysis of potential environmental impacts from a national perspective, the Chief of NRCS found that the program would not result in a significant impact on the quality of the human environment, particularly when focusing on the significant adverse impacts that NEPA is intended to help decision-makers avoid and mitigate against. Therefore, a FONSI was issued, and no environmental impact statement is required for national implementation of the program.

DATES: To ensure consideration, comments on the EA and FONSI must be postmarked on or before June 19, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments must be sent to Charles Whitmore, Acting Director, Conservation Operations Division, NRCS, U.S. Department of Agriculture,

P.O. Box 2890, Room 6034-S, Washington, DC 20013-2890.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Copies of the FONSI, the Final EA, or additional information on matters related to this **Federal Register** Notice can be obtained by contacting one of the following individuals at the addresses and telephone numbers shown below:

Mr. Anthony Esser, Environmental Quality Incentives Program Manager, Conservation Operations Division, NRCS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Room 6039-S, Washington, DC 20013-2890, Telephone: (202) 720-1840. Ms. Andrée DuVarney, National Environmental Specialist, Ecological Sciences Division, NRCS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Room 6158-S, Washington, DC 20013-2890, Telephone: (202) 720-4925.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Description of the Proposed Action**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program providing technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers for planning and implementing natural resource conservation practices on their farms and ranches. The purposes of EQIP, as amended by the 2002 Act, are to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals, and to optimize environmental benefits. The need to which NRCS is responding by proposing action is the need to implement EQIP as amended by the 2002 Act in a manner that achieves the purposes for which Congress authorized EQIP, including:

1. Assisting producers to comply with local, State, and national regulatory requirements concerning soil, water, and air quality; wildlife habitat; and surface and groundwater conservation;

2. Assisting producers to address national, State, Tribal, and local resource concerns so that there is no need for resource and regulatory programs;

3. Providing flexible assistance to producers to install and maintain conservation practices that enhance soil, water, related natural resources (including grazing lands and wetlands), and wildlife, while sustaining production of food and fiber; and

4. Assisting producers to make beneficial, cost-effective changes to cropping systems, grazing management, nutrient management associated with livestock, pest or irrigation management, or other practices on agricultural land.

Alternatives Analyzed

The allocation of EQIP funds is the only major program decision made at the national level that has an impact on the quality of the human environment because of the authority and flexibility that must be given to the NRCS State Conservationists to meet the program purposes, and because funding affects where practices will be implemented. NRCS considered three alternatives describing ways to allocate EQIP funds to the States, including allocating EQIP funds based on a national allocation formula, allocating EQIP funds in equal amounts to all States, or a no action alternative. The 2002 Act authorized the expenditure of additional, separate funds for promotion of ground and surface water conservation, so a separate set of alternatives addressed allocation of those funds, including allocating Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) funds based on an annual national evaluation of critical ground and surface water conservation needs, allocating the GSWC funds in equal amounts to all States, or a no action alternative.

The EA describes potential impacts associated with the alternatives described. The alternatives did not directly result in impacts to the quality of the human environment, but they do have an indirect effect on the geographic location of acres treated by EQIP funded conservation practices. The discussion under each alternative focused on the effects that the decision alternatives would have on where conservation practices would most likely be implemented. NRCS developed network diagrams depicting the chain of natural resource effects resulting from the application of each practice. Based on the analysis, NRCS determined that the use of a national allocation formula best ensured that funds were distributed in a manner that environmental benefits are optimized, and States and Territories with the most significant environmental and natural resource concerns can effectively address national conservation priorities.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Upon review of the analysis of potential environmental impacts associated with the selected alternatives, the Chief of NRCS found that, from a national perspective, the program would not result in a significant impact on the quality of the human environment, particularly when focusing on the significant adverse impacts that NEPA is intended to help decision-makers avoid and mitigate against. Because of the potential to

affect one type of resource while improving the condition of another resource, there may, at times, be minimal site-specific adverse environmental effects, individually or cumulatively. As in the past administration of EQIP, NRCS will continue to prepare documentation of an environmental evaluation on a site-specific level, and will consult with the appropriate entities to avoid, reduce, or mitigate adverse impacts on protected resources. NRCS will also comply with requirements protecting unique geographic features and other resources, as well as policies protecting natural resources. To the extent that other NRCS EQIP activities may result in significant effects to the quality of the human environment, a State or area-wide EA or Environmental Impact Statement may be prepared separately from the National EA. Therefore, a FONSI was issued and no environmental impact statement is required to support national implementation of the program.

Copies of the EA and FONSI may be reviewed at the following location: Conservation Operations Division, NRCS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 5227-S, Washington, DC 20013-2890. The documents may also be accessed on the Internet, at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/EnvAssess/EQIP/EQIP.html>.

Signed in Washington, DC, on May 8, 2003.

Bruce I. Knight,

Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

[FR Doc. 03-12526 Filed 5-19-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-16-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Inviting Applications for a University Value-Added Research Grant

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This Notice announces the availability of \$300,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2003 to fund a grant for research at a university concerning the effects of projects for value-added agricultural commodities or products on agricultural producers and the commodity markets. Only qualified universities are eligible to apply. This Notice lists the information needed to submit an application for these funds.

DATES: The deadline for receipt of an application is 4 p.m. EST on July 29, 2003. Comments regarding the

information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 must be received on or before July 21, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using an express mail or overnight courier service is: Marc Warman, USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 4016, Washington, DC 20250; Telephone: (202) 720-8460. Applications sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be sent to the following address: Marc Warman, USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service, STOP 3252, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-3252. Applications sent via email attachment must be sent to the following address: marc.warman@usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Haskell, Acting Deputy Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3250, Room 4016, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-3250, telephone: (202) 720-8460, or email: james.haskell@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Programs Affected

The research funded by this grant relates to a program listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program under the assigned number 10.352 (Value-Added Grants). This program is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.

Paperwork Reduction Act

The information collection requirements contained in this Notice have received temporary emergency clearance by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under Control Number 0570-0046. However, in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, RBS will seek standard OMB approval of the reporting requirements contained in this Notice and hereby opens a 60-day public comment period.

Title: Value-Added University Research Grant.

Type of Request: New Collection.

Abstract: This program will be administered by Cooperative Services within the Rural Business-Cooperative Service. The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-171, signed May 13, 2002) authorized the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to award a grant to support research at a university concerning the effects of projects for value-added agricultural commodities