

roads would be constructed and decommissioned after use; 17 miles of existing roads would be closed; 15 miles of existing roads would be permanently decommissioned; and 117 miles of existing roads would be reconstructed to sustain project use and reduce water quality impacts.

Lead Agency

The USDA Forest Service is the lead agency for this proposal.

Responsible Official

Plumas National Forest Supervisor James M. Peña is the responsible official. Plumas National Forest, PO Box 11500, Quincy, CA 95971.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

Forest Supervisor James M. Peña will decide whether to implement the Empire Project as proposed and described above, implement the project based on an alternative to this proposal that is formulated to resolve identified conflicts, or not implement this project at this time.

Scoping Process

Public questions and comments regarding this proposal are an integral part of this environmental analysis process. Comments will be used to identify issues and develop alternatives to the proposed action. To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible.

A copy of the Proposed Action and/or summary of the Proposed Action will be mailed to adjacent landowners, as well as those people and organizations that have indicated a specific interest in the Empire project, individuals who attended the two open houses held prior to the development of a landscape assessment for the watersheds surrounding the project, people who sent in previous comments, to Native American entities, and federal, state, and local agencies. The public will be notified of any meetings regarding this proposal by mailings and press releases sent to the local newspaper and media. There are no meetings planned at this time.

Permits or Licenses Required

An Air Pollution Permit and a Smoke Management Plan are required by local agencies.

Comment

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement under NEPA, which

will guide development of the EIS. Our desire is to receive substantive comments on the merits of the Proposed Action, as well as comments that address errors, misinformation, or information that has been omitted. Substantive comments are defined as comments within the scope of the proposal, that have a direct relationship to the proposal, and that include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official's consideration.

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 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 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.

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: February 3, 2005.

Terri Simon-Jackson,
Acting Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 05-2494 Filed 2-8-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Notice of Southwest Idaho Resource Advisory Committee Meeting

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463) and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-393), the Boise and Payette National Forests' Southwest Idaho Resource Advisory Committee will conduct a business meeting, which is open to the public.

DATES: Wednesday, February 16, 2005, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: Idaho Counties Risk Management Program Building, 3100 South Vista Avenue, Boise, Idaho.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Agenda topics will include review and approval of project proposals, and is an open public forum.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Doug Gochnour, Designated Federal Officer, at 208-392-6681 or e-mail dgochnour@fs.fed.us.

Dated: January 3, 2005.

Richard M. Christensen,
Engineering, Lands, and Minerals Officer,
Boise National Forest.

[FR Doc. 05-2485 Filed 2-8-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service: North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation; Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.