

raised by 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 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.

After the 45-day comment period ends, the Forest Service will analyze comments received and address them in the final EIS. The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in 2004. The Responsible Official is the Payette National Forest Supervisor. The decision will be documented, including the rationale for the decision, in a Record of Decision (ROD). The decision will be subject to review under the Forest Service Appeal Regulations at 36 CFR 215.

Dated: December 20, 2002.

Mark Madrid,

Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Payette National Forest, Idaho; Sloan-Kennally Timber Sale, Goose Creek Watershed Projects, Brown Creek Timber Sale, Middle Fork Weiser Vegetation Management Project; Little Weiser Vegetation Management Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service will prepare five supplemental environmental impact statements (SEISs). The projects are: Sloan-Kennally Timber Sale, Goose Creek Watershed Projects, Brown Creek Timber Sale, Middle Fork Weiser Vegetation Management Project; Little Weiser Vegetation Management Project. The proposed actions in the original EISs are to harvest timber, conduct prescribe burns, manage roads, and implement related activities. The SEISs will provide additional information on the Forest-wide status of the pileated woodpecker on the Forest. The Payette National Forest invites written

comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis and the issues to address. The agency gives notice of the full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and decision-making process so that interested and affected people know how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments need to be received in writing by January 17, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Mark Madrid, Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest, P.O. Box 1026, McCall ID 83638.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions about the proposal action should be directed to Curtis Spalding, Environmental Coordinator, at the above address, phone (208) 634-0796.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Payette National Forest completed Draft EISs (DEISs) and Final EISs (FEISs) for five projects between August 1998 and December 2001. The Forest Supervisor signed Record of Decisions (RODs) for each. Each project proceeded through the administrative appeal process (36 CFR 215) and was affirmed by the Deputy Regional Forester. In June 2002, the projects were named in a court complaint filed by the group Neighbors of Cuddy Mountain (Civ. 02-244-MJW) in District Court for the District of Idaho. After a series of hearings, on November 8, 2002, the Court ordered an injunction against the five projects based on the issue of old growth habitat retention.

Habitat and population monitoring has provided a body of data indicating the population trends of the pileated woodpecker on the Forest. The purpose of the supplemental environmental impact statements (SEISs) is to provide additional environmental analysis on the projects' compliance with the Forest Plan's old growth retention standard in light of the body of available data, to disclose that analysis to the public for review and comment, and to provide a basis for the original or new project decisions.

The preliminary issue for these SEISs is the effect of the proposed timber harvest on old growth habitat for pileated woodpecker, the management indicator for old growth habitat on the Payette National Forest.

A range of reasonable alternatives will be considered. The no-action alternative will serve as a baseline for comparison of alternatives. The proposed action will be considered along with additional alternative(s) needed to address major issues identified during scoping while meeting the meet the purpose and need of the projects defined in the original EISs.

Comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the project record and available for public review.

The Forest Service is seeking information and comments from other Federal, State, and local agencies; Tribal governments; organization; and individuals who may be interested in or affected by the proposals. This input will be used in preparation of the SEISs.

Comments will be appreciated throughout the analysis process. The draft SEISs will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and are anticipated to be available for public review by January, 2003. The comment period on the draft SEISs will be 45 days. It is important that those interested in the management of the Payette National Forest participate at that time.

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, 1002 (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 important that those interested in this proposed action participation 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 raised by the proposed actions, comments on the draft environmental impact statements should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statements. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft statements or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statements. 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.

After the 45-day comment period ends on the draft EIS, the Forest Service will analyze comments received and address them in the final supplemental EISs (FSEISs). The FSEISs are scheduled to be completed in April 2003. The Responsible Official is the Payette National Forest Supervisor. For each project, if different from the original decision, the new decision will be documented, including the rationale for the decision, in a Record of Decision (ROD). Any decision will be subject to review under the Forest Service Appeal Regulations at 36 CFR 215.

Dated: December 23, 2002.

Mark J. Madrid,
Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Interface Recreation Trails Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Revised notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: This is a revision of the notice of intent published on November 22, 2000 (pages 76332-76333). This notice documents changes in the information in the previous notice of intent. The changes are: (1) A change in the responsible official from the District Ranger to the Forest Supervisor, and (2) A delay in filing the draft and final environmental impact statement.

The Forest Service intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental consequences of the proposed Interface Recreation Trails Project on the Calaveras Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest. The agency proposes to design a system of recreation routes, determine the uses that can occur on each route in the system, and develop measures to protect natural resources on approximately 8,700 acres on National Forest System lands. Hiking, horseback riding, mountain bike riding, off-highway vehicle riding, and highway licensed vehicle riding are the uses being considered in this analysis. The purpose of the proposal is to provide a variety of recreation opportunities for route users while protecting the natural

resources, minimizing conflicts between recreationists and others.

DATES: The comment period for this analysis closed January 8, 2001. This is not a solicitation for comments. The draft environmental impact statement is expected February 2003 and the final environmental impact statement is expected June 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Robert W. Griffith, District Ranger, Calaveras Ranger District, Stanislaus National Forest, USDA Forest Service, PO Box 500, Hathaway Pines, California, 95233.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Greg Casselberry, Planning Team Leader, telephone: (209) 795-1381, extension 321. Email: gcasselberry@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

The existing trail system in the Interface Area developed primarily as a result of users adopting old logging and mining roads, skid trails, fuel breaks, and abandoned water ditches for their trail use. Over time, users constructed additional trails to access new areas, avoid impassable sections of existing trails, form loops and connectors with other trails, and provide the desired variety of challenges and experiences.

Over the last 30 years, local residents, second homeowners, and their friends have used and enjoyed this system of routes for both non-motorized and motorize recreation. During the mid-1990s, the need for a designed trail system and a site-specific management analysis for the Interface Area became evident. Increased trails use, resource impacts on some trail segments, trail-user conflict, and complaints from residents such as those with homes near Forest Road 5N95Y or near trail system access points from subdivisions prompted the Forest Service to begin project-level analysis and planning in the area.

The purpose or goal in designing the recreation route system, designating uses, and developing resource protection measures is to provide a variety of recreation opportunities for all trail users, while protecting natural resources, minimizing conflicts between trail users and others.

Proposed Action

The proposed project is located in Calaveras County, California within the Calaveras Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest in portions of sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 26, T.4N., R.14E., a portion of section 18, T.4N., R.15E., portions of sections 13, 24, 25, 26, 35, 36, T.5N., R.14E., and

portions of sections 7, 8, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, T.5N., R.15E., MDB&M. It is adjacent to the western boundary of the communities of Hathaway Pines, Avery, Arnold, and White Pines.

Under the current proposal being analyzed, non-motorized and motorized recreation use (shared use) will continue to be allowed on 19.5 miles of existing trails and roads. 16.6 miles of existing trails and roads will be designated and available for non-motorized recreation use only. 17.4 miles of existing roads will be routes for highway-licensed vehicles only. There will be 10.0 miles of multiple use routes and 10.7 miles of non-motorized trails constructed. 26.5 miles of existing trails and roads will be closed. Five gates will be closed to public motorized traffic. One mile of Forest Road 5N95Y will be chipsealed. Parking areas will be established on Forest Road 5N52, and County Road 323 to access the trail system. A low-water crossing and approach will be constructed at Slick Rock Crossing. Street legal vehicles only zones that are a minimum of ¼ mile wide will be established adjacent to subdivisions. A permanent public easement for the segment of the trail that crosses private land located in the SW¼ of the NE¼ of section 30, T.5N., R.15E. will be sought from the landowner. Regulatory orders will be developed to enforce trail use restrictions, trail closures, street legal zone restrictions, and gate closures.

Possible Alternatives

A range of alternatives to the proposed action will be considered. The alternatives will be designed to provide different ways to address and respond to significant issues and to fulfill the purpose and need for action. A reasonable range of alternatives will be evaluated and reasons given for eliminating some alternatives from detailed study. A no action alternative is required. Under the no action alternative, the recreation route system, recreation route uses, and Forest Service management practices would continue unchanged, just as they are today.

Responsible Official

The Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest, 19777 Greenley Road, Sonoma, California, 95370-5909 is the Responsible Official who will decide what actions are to be implemented to provide a variety of recreation opportunities for route users within the project area. He will document his decisions and rationale in a Record of Decision.