A ''Record of Decision, Onondaga County Priority Watersheds Agricultural Environmental Management Program, Primary Purpose Determination for Federal Tax Purposes'' has been prepared and is available upon request from, Walter G. Neuhauser, Executive Director, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District, 2571 U.S. Rt. 11, Suite #1, Lafayette, NY 13084–9641 or from the Director, Conservation Operations Division, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, PO Box 2890, Washington DC 20013.

Determination

As required by section 126(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended, I have examined the authorizing legislation, regulations and operating procedures regarding the Onondaga County Priority Watersheds Agricultural Environmental Management Program. In accordance with the criteria set out in 7 CFR Part 14, I have determined that all cost-share payments for implementation of best management practices made under this program as part of an Agricultural Environmental Management Plan are primarily for the purpose of conserving water resources, and protecting or restoring the environment, in the priority watersheds of Onondaga County. Subject to further determination by the Secretary of the Treasury, this determination permits payment recipients to exclude from gross income, for Federal income tax purposes, all or part of such cost-share payments made under said program.

Signed at Washington, DC, on December 8, 1998.

Dan Glickman,

Secretary, Department of Agriculture.

[FR Doc. 99–520 Filed 1–8–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–16–U

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Tower Fire Rehabilitation Projects, Umatilla National Forest, Grant & Umatilla Counties, Oregon

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 to rehabilitate lands and resources burned in 1996 by the Tower Fire. The project area is located on the North Fork John Day Ranger District and lies approximately 12 miles southeast of Ukiah, Oregon, within the North Fork John Day River Sub-basin.

Projects would be designed at the landscape level to replant forest and riparian vegetation (including the use of herbicides in some upland areas to control vegetation which would compete with new seedlings); stabilize slopes exposed by the fire; enhance wildlife habitat; reduce recreational disturbance of moderate and severely burned sites; reconstruct, repair, or decommission degraded roads and stream crossings; restore and protect stream habitat; reduce hazards along open roads, OHV trails, and a campground; restore forest stand structure and composition through precommercial or commercial thinning; reduce fuel loading to create conditions which would allow the use of prescribed fire; subsoil known areas of soil compaction; and salvage valuable timber that was damaged or killed by the fire. The proposed projects will be in compliance with the 1990 Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), as amended, which provides the overall guidance for management of this area.

The agency invites written comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis. In addition, the agency will give notice of the full environmental analysis once it nears completion so that interested and affected people may participate and contribute to a final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by February 26, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments and suggestions concerning the management of this area to Craig Smith-Dixon, North Fork John Day District Ranger, PO Box 158, Ukiah, OR 97880.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the proposed project and scope of analysis should be directed to Tim Davis, Tower Projects Team Leader, North Fork John Day Ranger District. Phone: (541) 427–5341.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Tower Fire burned approximately 50,800 acres, 46,300 of which occur on the Umatilla National Forest. The decision area for the Tower Fire Rehabilitation Projects includes all 46,300 acres. It includes portions of the Cable Creek, Bridge/Pine North Fork John Day, Big, and Hidaway watersheds of the North Fork John Day River Sub-basin. The area also includes all of the South Fork-Tower Roadless Area (16,300 acres) and is bounded on the south by the North Fork John Day Wilderness.

Originally, five separate analyses were proposed for salvage and restoration projects with the Tower Fire area. These were: Hairy Hazard Tree CE, Tower Fire Salvage EA, Big Tower Salvage and Revegetation Project, EA, South Tower Fire Recovery Projects EA, and Cable Fire Recovery Project EA. In January 1998, the Big Tower Fire Recovery Projects Decision Notice and Environmental Assessment was challenged in court. The Federal District Court upheld the project decision and the three salvage sales associated with the Big Tower Salvage and Revegetation Project were sold and awarded. The court was petitioned for a stay of implementation but the stay was denied. The District Court's decision was then appealed and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the decision, instructing the Forest Service to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for any further projects within the entire Tower Fire. All activities on the three timber sales associated with the Big Tower Salvage and Revegetation Project as well as the Hairy Hazard Tree Sale (which was to remove hazard trees along open roads) were stopped. At the time of the halt order, 19 million board feet of the 26 million board feet of timber sold had been cut and removed from three of the four timber sales. This notice of intent initiates the analysis for the required EIS covering the remainder of the Big Tower Salvage and Revegetation projects and all other fire recovery projects proposed within the burn. Since the fall of 1996, many restoration activities have been initiated, including tree planting, erosion seeding, road stabilization, and salvage of fire-killed trees. Completion of the EIS and associated decisions will allow these and other watershed restoration projects to be implemented.

The purpose of the Forest Service proposal is to rehabilitate portions of the burn to facilitate reaching the desired future condition for the area and recover economic value of timber where such salvage is compatible with protection of damaged resources. Proposed projects would involve: Reforestation of areas which sustained high tree mortality (including ecologically important stands of western white pine); revegetation of burned riparian areas; reconstruction of roads open to the public and repair of roads closed to the public but still required for administrative use; decommissioning of degraded roads; repair or replacement of road culverts to improve fish passage; reconstruction of stream crossings which are considered at risk due to fire-

induced high flows; removal or repair of degraded stock ponds; restoration of large wood to deficient stream channels; construction of grade control structures where gullys have been identified on streams; seeding and fertilization where wildlife forage has been limited by the fire; breaking tops out of scattered fire-killed trees to enhance snag habitat; fencing of degraded meadows, springs, and stockponds to promote natural recovery and improve wetland habitat; relocation of the Roundaway 4-Wheeler trail to a safer, more stable site; removal of hazardous trees along open roads, OHV trails, several trailheads, and a campground; stabilization of highly erodible slopes and a small landslide on Hidaway Creek by seeding or transplanting shrubs; subsoiling areas compacted by previous timber harvest practices to reduce overland flows; application of prescribed fire over a five year period to enhance forage and shrub composition; salvage harvest of 5,100 acres resulting in recovery of approximately 21 MMbf of valuable fire-killed timber (including timber already sold but enjoined by the court order); thin overstocked stands (up to 1,000 acres (3.2 MMbf) of which would be of merchantable size) to improve tree vigor, adjust stand structure to reduce threat of future crown fire, and mimic historic specifies compositions; control competing vegetation within reforestation areas using herbicides to assure seedling survival; define and harden dispersed campsites and install informational signing to control recreational disturbance of burned areas; and create a fuel break between the South Fork-Tower Roadless Area and the North Fork John Day Wilderness to expand options for natural fires in both areas. Only three planting and the above-mentioned fuelbreak would occur within the South Fork-Tower Roadless Area, no harvest or other restoration projects are proposed within this area.

Forage enhancement seeding would occur on sites that are devoid of herbaceous cover or with limited amounts of vegetation. The seeding mixture would consist of native seed and/or non-persistent annuals, be certified weed free, and would not exceed 20 pounds per acre. Application would be accomplished aerially with selected areas seeded by hand. Aerial broadcast fertilization of 100 pounds per acre would also be conducted. The fertilizer mix would consist of 27–12-0 plus 12% pelletized sulfur. No fertilizer would be applied in or adjacent to Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCA's).

Proposed timber salvage and commercial thinning units would be harvested using tractor, harvester/forwarder, skyline, and helicopter logging systems. Access for salvage and commercial thinning would require reconstruction of about 6 miles of existing roads and construction of approximately 10 miles of temporary roads. The temporary roads would be closed and obliterated after completion of project activities. Activities that would occur concurrently or in association with timber harvest include subsoiling to mitigate soil compaction, waterbarring, erosion control seeding of skid trails and landings to restore soil productivity, burning of some slash, and trapping or barriers to prevent animal damage to seedlings.

Planting of tree seedlings both within and outside harvest units would involve control of vegetation which could compete aggressively enough to kill the seedlings. Control would be achieved across approximately 11,000 planted acres by the ground application of herbicides. The objective of such treatment is to ensure that 70% or more of the planted seedlings will still be alive after three growing seasons. With an average of 222 planted seedlings per acre, this means that herbicides would be applied to 13% of a reforestation unit—87% of the land area within the unit would not receive herbicides. No herbicide application would occur within RACFISH Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. Herbicides would be applied once during the five-year tree establishment period. Herbicides would be used as a correction treatment when other methods are ineffective or would increase project costs unreasonably. For areas that are not expected to exceed a competing vegetation threshold, an 18 inch hand scalp would be used as a site preparation method when the seedlings are planted but no herbicide would be applied.

Public participation will be especially important at several points during the analysis, beginning with the scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7). Some scoping has already been conducted through the five initial analyses mentioned earlier. Information received during this scoping will be incorporated into the analysis for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Additional scoping will include listing of this EIS in the Winter 1999 issue of the Umatilla National Forest's Schedule of Proposed Activities; letters to agencies, organizations, and individuals who have already indicated their interest in such activities; and news releases in the East Oregonian and other local newspapers. No public meetings have been planned at this time; they will be scheduled later as needed. This notice is to encourage members of the public, interested organizations, federal, state and county agencies, and local tribal governments to take part in planning this project. They are encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. Any information received will be used in preparation of the Draft EIS. The scoping process includes:

1. Identifying potential issues
2. Identifying major issues to be analyzed in depth
3. Identifying issues which have been covered by a relevant previous environmental analysis
4. Considering additional alternatives based on themes which will be derived from issues recognized during scoping activities
5. Identifying potential environmental effects of this project and alternatives (i.e. direct, indirect, and cumulative effects and connected actions).

Preliminary issues include: Effects of the proposed fuelbreak on the roadless character of the South Fork-Tower Roadless Area; cumulative effects of past and proposed activities together with effects from the fire; effects of proposed activities on soils exposed by the fire; effects of proposed activities on water quality and the anadromous and resident fisheries resource; ability of proposed activities to restore historic vegetation composition, structures, and patterns; effects of proposed herbicide use, and economic viability of salvage.

A full range of alternatives will be considered, including a ''no-action'' alternative in which none of the activities proposed above would be implemented. Based on the issues gathered through scoping, the action alternatives will vary in (1) the number, type and location of rehabilitation projects, (2) use of herbicides or mechanical methods to control competing vegetation in areas to be planted, (3) the silvicultural and post-harvest treatments prescribed, (4) the amount and location of harvest and thinning, and (5) the amount of time needed to move the area toward its desired condition. Tentative action alternatives are: The proposed action, a modified proposed action with no use of herbicides, an alternative which would not remove or reduce the current number of live trees within the burn, and an alternative that excludes any harvest or temporary road construction.

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available to the public for review by April, 1999. At that time, the EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the

Federal Register. The comment period on the Draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA publishes the Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register.** It is important that those interested in the management of the Umatilla National Forest participate at that time.

The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed by July, 1999. In the final EIS, the Forest Service will to respond to comments and responses received during the comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the Draft EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making a decision regarding the proposal.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice at this early stage 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 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 provision of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points).

The Forest Service is the lead agency. Jeff Blackwood, Forest Supervisor, is the Responsible Official. As the Responsible Official, he will decide which, if any, of the proposed projects will be implemented. He will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations (36 CFR part 215).

Dated: December 30, 1998.

Jeff D. Blackwood,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 99–487 Filed 1–8–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

National Sheep Industry Improvement Center; Notice of Annual Board of Directors Meeting

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of annual board meeting.

SUMMARY: The Board of Directors of the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center announces that it will hold its annual Board of Directors meeting. The meeting will be held over 2 days in the Washington, DC area.

DATES: The meeting dates are:

1. Februrary 17, 1999, 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., Arlington, VA.

2. February 18, 1999, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Washington, DC.

ADDRESSES: The meeting locations are:

1. Arlington, VA—Holiday Inn Westpark, 1900 N. Ft. Meyer Drive, Arlington, VA, Board Room conference room.

2. Washington, DC—USDA South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC, Room 3107.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Cooperative Services, RBS, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250–3252, telephone (202) 690–0368. (This is not a toll free number.) E-mail: thomas.stafford@usda.gov. The Federal Information Relay service on 1–800–877–8339 may be used by TDD users.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The February board meeting will serve as the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center's annual meeting. Specific meeting rooms are subject to last minute changes.

Background

The sheep and goat industries, the 1996 Farm Bill established the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center to assist and strengthen the U.S. sheep and goat industries through projects and assistance financed through the Center's revolving fund. The Center is managed by a nine member, non-compensated board. The Board of Directors may use the monies in the fund to make grants, and intermediate and long-term loans, contracts, cooperative repayable agreements, or cooperative agreements in accordance with an annual strategic plan submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Purposes of the Center

The purposes of the Center are to:

(1) Promote strategic development activities and collaborative efforts by private and State entities to maximize the impact of Federal assistance to strengthen and enhance production and marketing of sheep or goat products in the United States;

(2) Optimize the use of available human capital and resources within the sheep or goat industries;

(3) Provide assistance to meet the needs of the sheep or goat industry for infrastructure development, business development, production, resource development, and market and environmental research;

(4) Advance activities that empower and build the capacity of the United States sheep or goat industry to design unique responses to the special needs of the sheep or goat industries on both a regional and national basis; and

(5) Adopt flexible and innovative approaches to solving the long-term needs of the United States sheep and goat industries.

Board Meetings

Board meetings are open to the public.

Authority: 7 USC 2008j, Pub.L. 104–130.

Dated: December 16, 1998.

Dayton J. Watkins,

Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service.

[FR Doc. 99–474 Filed 1–8–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–XY–U

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List; Proposed Additions and Deletions

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Proposed additions to and deletions from procurement list.