

and Guidelines, the management of a number of species of plants and animals for which little information was available at the time the plan was authored.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of implementing Forest Plan modeled silvicultural prescriptions and associated harvest techniques on existing mollusk populations. It will also analyze long-term impacts, if any, and will study the recovery rate of these species if impacts are caused by treatments.

Many SM mollusks have been found in the Salmon River Watershed on the Klamath National Forest as a result of recent project-level and strategic surveys. These forested areas have experienced varying levels of human and natural disturbance (*e.g.*, timber harvest, wildfire, roads). The administrative study will be used to gather information on the impacts of various harvest techniques, logging systems, and associated treatments on mollusks where very little information exists. Completion of this administrative study may assist with the development of long-term land management options on the Klamath National Forest.

Decision To Be Made

Whether the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Klamath National Forest will implement this project as proposed, including a project-specific amendment to the Forest Plan.

Responsible Official

Margaret Boland, Forest Supervisor, USDA Forest Service, 1312 Fairlane Road, Yreka, California 96097 is the Responsible Official for making the recommendation whether to implement this administrative study or not. She will document her decision and rationale in a Record of Decision.

Public Involvement, Rationale, and Public Meetings

In October 2000, this administrative study was included in the Klamath National Forest's Fall 2000 Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), which was posted on the Klamath National Forest's internet website and mailed to the SOPA mailing list. In November 2000, a scoping letter of the proposed administrative study was sent to potentially affected individuals and anyone who expressed interest in this study. This notice will invite public comment for a period of 90 days. Comments received will be included in the documentation for the EIS. The public is encouraged to take part in the process and is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time

during the analysis and prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in, or affected by, the proposed administrative study.

While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 45 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the Draft EIS. A public meeting associated with the project will be held to gain a better understanding of public issues and concerns. This meeting will be held in the late spring of 2001.

Information from the meetings will be used in preparation of the draft and final EIS. The scoping process will include identifying potential issues, significant issues to be analyzed in depth, alternatives to the proposed action, and potential environmental effects of the proposal and alternatives.

Electronic Access and Filing Addresses

Comments may be sent by electronic mail (e-mail) to r5_klamath_Comment@fs.fed.us. Please reference the Comet Administrative Study on the subject line. Also, include your name and mailing address with your comments so documents pertaining to this project may be mailed to you.

Estimated Dates for Filing

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by November 2001. At that time, 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 of EPA publishes the Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in the management of this area participate at that time.

The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed by February 2002. In the Final EIS, the Forest Service is required 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 Reviewers' Obligation To Comment

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 EISs 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 EIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the Final EIS 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 EIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on 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 EIS 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.

Margaret J. Boland,

Forest Supervisor, Klamath National Forest.
[FR Doc. 00-30400 Filed 11-28-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Lassen National Forest, California; Mineral Forest Recovery Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze and disclose the environmental effects of implementing resource management activities that include fuelbreak construction consisting of a strategic system of defensible fuel profile zones (DFPZs), group selection harvests, and riparian restoration projects on the Almanor Ranger District in the Lassen National Forest. These activities are part

of a 5-year pilot project to test and demonstrate the effectiveness of certain resource management activities designed to meet ecologic, economic, and fuel reduction objectives on the Lassen National Forest as well as on the Plumas National Forest and on the Sierraville Ranger District of the Tahoe National Forest. This notice applies only to the Lassen National Forest; however, all three National Forests were named in the Record of Decision (ROD, August 1999) for the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group (HFQLG) Forest Recovery Act Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The ROD amended the management direction in the Land and Resource Management Plans for these three National Forests. The need for the ROD and FEIS was generated from the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group (HFQLG) Forest Recovery Act (Act) of October 21, 1998.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing on or before December 29, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Susan Jeheber-Matthews, Almanor District Ranger, P.O. Box 767, Chester, CA, 96020.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Lou Mini, Interdisciplinary Team Leader or Judy Welles, Interdisciplinary Team Silviculturist, telephone: (530) 258-2141.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Proposed Action

To accomplish the purpose of the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group (HFQLG) Forest Recovery Act, resource management activities included in the proposed Mineral Forest Recovery project and DFPZ construction, group selection harvests, and riparian restoration projects. The proposed project is located in Tehama County, California, within the Almanor Ranger District of the Lassen National Forest in all or portions of Sections 1-3, T.28N., R.3E., Sections 1-4, 9-15, 22-26, 33-36, T.29N., R.3E., Sections 3, 4, 6-10, 15-21, 28, 29, 31-33, T.29N., R.4E., Sections 26, 27, 34-36, T.30N., R.3E., and Section 31, T.30N., R.4E., MDM.

The Mineral Forest Recovery Project area is one of five sub networks established to implement a DFPZ network on the District. The purpose of DFPZs in this area is to reduce the number of acres that would be burned by high-intensity stand-replacing fires. DFPZs are needed in this area in order to improve suppression efficiency by creating an environment where wildfires would burn at lower intensities and where fire fighting production rates would be increased.

DFPZs are strategically located strips of land on which forest fuels, both living and dead, have been modified in order to reduce the potential for a sustained crown fire and to allow fire suppression personnel a safer location from which to take action against a wildfire. Fuels treatment strategies would focus on the alteration or reduction of surface fuels, ladder fuels, and canopy closure in order to effectively alter fire behavior and severity. Treatment methods will include thinning timbered stands, hand or machine piling of excessive forest fuels, and prescribed fire. The Mineral Forest Recovery Project proposes to construct 3,700 acres of DFPZ's in the Mineral project area including an estimated 2,700 acres that would be thinned.

Group selection harvests would be implemented to promote diversity in stand age and structure. Root disease centers of dwarf mistletoe infected areas would be targeted for group selection, as well as those stands that are even-aged in structure. Some understocked areas would also be regenerated using the group selection prescription. Group selection would be implemented on an estimated 550 acres within the Mineral Forest Recovery Project area. Fuels treatment would occur on 460 acres within group selections.

New construction of permanent and temporary roads would be needed to economically access stands requiring treatment for DFPZ and group selection harvest. Within the project area, 5.9 miles of permanent new road construction and 5.6 miles of temporary road construction would be implemented for this purpose. New construction of permanent roads would be added to the Forest transportation system. Temporary roads would be obliterated upon completion of use.

Riparian restoration projects would include erosion control treatment on existing landings and skidtrails, and on eroding streambanks that are contributing sediment to the streams. Treatment of existing roads would be implemented as part of an overall riparian restoration strategy to reduce impacts caused by roads. Impacts include erosion and increased runoff from inadequately or poorly drained roads, especially those located close to streams and with poorly designed drainage structures and stream crossings. Road treatments would include road relocation (1.6 miles of new construction, all of which is included in the new construction mentioned above), reconstruction (9.8 miles of existing roads for DFPZ and group selection access), and decommissioning (12.2 miles).

Reconstruction activities would also include improvement or relocation of three existing in-channel water sources.

Decision To Be Made

The decision to be made is whether to implement the proposed action as described above, to meet the purpose and need for action through some other combination of activities, or to take no action at this time.

Responsible Official and Lead Agency

The USDA Forest Service is the lead agency for this proposal. District Ranger Susan Jeheber-Matthews is the responsible official.

Tentative or Preliminary Issues and Possible Alternatives

An anticipated public issue with the Mineral Forest Recovery Project is the proposal to implement resource management activities within suitable California spotted owl habitat. In order to fully test the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act on the Almanor Ranger District (*e.g.*, implement contiguous DFPZs on the landscape), it is necessary to analyze and implement the resource management activities outlined in the Act within suitable habitat for the California spotted owl. The Mineral Forest Recovery Project proposed action includes projects within suitable habitat.

The Record of Decision for the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act FEIS stated that California spotted owl habitat would be avoided at the site-specific project level until a new California spotted owl habitat management strategy is released. The decision to implement resource management activities within suitable owl habitat in the Mineral Forest Recovery Project area will be based upon one or more of the following three actions:

(1) A decision is made on the Sierra Nevada Conservation Framework (that would amend the Lassen NF Land and Resource Management Plan) that defines a new owl strategy and allows the implementation of resource management activities as outlined in the Act, or;

(2) A new California spotted owl viability assessment is completed providing direction encompassing the species' range and the Lassen NF Land and Resource Management Plan is amended to include the new owl strategy, or;

(3) A site-specific California spotted owl strategy would be developed and implemented for this project resulting in

a non-significant amendment to the Lassen NF Forest Plan.

Alternatives currently being considered for the Mineral Forest Recovery Project include: (a) No action; (b) the proposed action as outlined above, and; (c) an alternative, based on the proposed action, that does not enter into suitable California spotted owl habitat.

Public Involvement

Comments from the public and other agencies will be used in preparation of the draft EIS. The scoping process will be used to identify questions and issues regarding the proposed action. An issue is defined as a point of dispute, debate, or disagreement relating to a specific proposed action based on its anticipated effects. Significant issues brought to our attention are used during an environmental analysis to develop alternatives to the proposed action. Some issues raised in scoping may be considered non-significant because they are: (1) Beyond the scope of the proposed action and its purpose and need; (2) already decided by law, regulation, or the Land and Resource Management Plan; (3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or (4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence.

While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 30 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the draft EIS.

Identification of Permits or Licenses Required

No permits or licenses have been identified to implement the proposed action.

Estimated Dates for Filing

The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency and available for public review in March 2001. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date of the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability of the draft EIS in the **Federal Register**.

The Reviewers Obligation To Comment

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 statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that 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 Regulation of implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Dated: November 16, 2000.

Edward C. Cole,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 00-30017 Filed 11-28-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

National Agricultural Statistics Service

Notice of Intent to Seek Approval to Conduct an Information Collection

AGENCY: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget regulations at 5 CFR part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the intent of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to request approval for a new information collection, the 2002 Census of Agriculture Screening.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by February 3, 2001 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS:

Contact Rich Allen, Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 4117 South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-2001, (202) 720-4333.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: 2002 Census of Agriculture Screening.

Type of Request: Intent to Seek Approval to Conduct an Information Collection.

Abstract: The Census of Agriculture conducted every 5 years is the primary source of statistics concerning the nation's agricultural industry and provides the only basis for consistent, comparable data at the county, state, and national levels. To ensure that only active farms are included in the 2002 Census of Agriculture, operations on the census mail list that have an unknown farm status will be mailed a "screener" postcard prior to the full census. Response to the postcard will determine the operation's eligibility for the full census questionnaire. Identifying and removing non-farms from the census mail list will significantly reduce respondent burden and cost for the census. The screener postcard will be used in all states. Initial mail out is planned for late May 2002 with a follow-up mailing to non-respondents 6 weeks later. Response to this inquiry will be required by law under 7 U.S.C. 2204g. A voluntary, small-scale test will be conducted in May of 2001 to evaluate wording and the effect on the mail list. These data will be collected under the authority of 7 U.S.C. 2204(a). Individually identifiable data are governed by Section 1770 of the Food Security Act of 1985, 7 U.S.C. 2276, which requires USDA to afford strict confidentiality to non-aggregated data provided by respondents.

Estimate of Burden: This information collection consists of a letter and self-mailing postcard with six questions. Public reporting burden will be 2 minutes per refusal (non-response), 3 minutes per screen-out (questions 1-4, 6=No), and 4 minutes per positive response (question 5).

Respondents: Farm and ranch operators.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 751,500 (mail-out).

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 40,080 hours.

Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained