

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 review'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. (*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 actions participate by the close of the 45-day comment period so that substantive comments and objects 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 statements.

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

Comments on the draft EIS should be directed to the responsible official: Rick Prausa, Forest Supervisor, Lewis and Clark National Forest, 1101 15th Street North, Great Falls, MT 59401.

Dated: August 19, 2002.

Rick Prausa,

Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Notice of Sanders County Resource Advisory Committee Meeting

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Public Law 92-463) and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-393) the Lolo and Kootenai National Forests' Sanders County Resource Advisory Committee will meet on August 27 at 6 p.m. in Thompson Falls, Montana for a business meeting. The meeting is open to the public.

DATES: August 27, 2002.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Thompson Falls Courthouse, 1111 Main Street, Thompson Falls, MT 59873.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lisa Krueger, Designated Forest Official (DFO), District Ranger Plains/Thompson Falls District, Lolo National Forest at (406) 826-4321, or Brian Avery, District Ranger, Cabinet Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest at (406) 827-3533.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: If the meeting location is changed, notice will be posted in the local newspapers, including the Clark Fork Valley Press, the Sanders County Ledger, Daily Interlake and the Missoulian.

Dated: August 16, 2002.

Brian Avery,

Committee Coordinator, District Ranger, Cabinet Ranger District.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

RIN 0596-AB94

Clarification of Extraordinary Circumstances for Categories of Actions Excluded From Documentation in an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; adoption of final interim directive.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service is adopting an Interim Directive to guide employees in complying with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for certain actions which can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. The Interim Directive clarifies the consideration of extraordinary circumstances as they apply to categorical exclusions. The intent of this

Interim Directive is to facilitate employees' consistent interpretation and application of CEQ regulations and related agency policy.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This Interim Directive No. 1909.15-2002-2 is effective August 23, 2002.

ADDRESSES: This Interim Directive is available electronically from the Forest Service via the World Wide Web/Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives>. Single paper copies of this Interim Directive also are available by contacting Dave Sire, Forest Service, USDA, Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff (Mail Stop 1104), 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1104.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dave Sire, Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff, 202-205-2935, or Julia Riber, Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff, 406-329-3678.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 20, 2001, the Forest Service published a proposed Interim Directive to Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30, which would partially revise the agency's direction on the use of categorical exclusions (66 FR 48412). The intent of this proposed Interim Directive was to assist employees in interpreting and complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for certain actions which can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS). The proposed Interim Directive would have added three new categories for special use authorizations involving administrative changes when no changes are proposed in the authorized activities or facilities. The proposal also included a modification of handbook text to clarify agency policy concerning extraordinary circumstances.

Nearly 26,000 responses in the form of letters, postcards, and e-mail messages were received during the 60-day comment period. These comments came from private citizens, elected officials, and from groups and individuals representing businesses, private organizations, and Federal agencies. Responses consisted of over 800 original letters and over 25,000 form letters.

Public comment on the Interim Directive addressed a wide range of topics, many of which were directed at general Forest Service management direction, particularly the management of roadless areas. Most comments revealed a significant split in opinion on