

be considered. Knowledge of these issues and concerns will help establish the scope of the Forest Service environmental analysis and define the kind and range of alternatives to be considered. Forest Service officials and the proponent will describe and explain the proposed actions and the process of environmental analysis and disclosure to be followed in evaluating the MDP. The Forest Service welcomes any public comments on the MDP.

The Responsible Official: Sonny LaSalle, Forest Supervisor, White River National Forest, P.O. Box 948, Glenwood Springs, CO. 81602.

We expect to publish the draft environmental impact statement in late 1996 or early 1997, to ask for public comment for a period of 45 days, and to complete a final environmental impact statement in mid 1997.

The 45-day public comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will commence on the day the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a "Notice of Availability in the Federal Register.

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.) Please note that comments you make on the draft environmental impact statement will be regarded as public information.

Dated: August 2, 1996.

Veto J. LaSalle,

White River National Forest, Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 96-20325 Filed 8-8-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-BW-M

Deadwood Ecosystem Analysis '96, Boise National Forest, Idaho

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Lowman Ranger District of the Boise National Forest will prepare an environmental impact statement on a proposal to treat 22,910 acres within the 44,552 acre Deadwood Ecosystem Analysis '96 Project Area through timber harvest, precommercial thinning and/or prescribed fire. The proposal would reduce stand densities and alter tree species composition to favor densities and tree species which are resistant and/or resilient to wildfire, insect attack, and disease.

It is believed that density reduction and reintroduction of fire will improve the resistance and resilience of stands. Through treatment, these stands would be maintained in the early seral state. Stands in early seral condition have a high proportion of shade intolerant tree species which are resistant to insect and disease attack and capable of withstanding catastrophic fire.

The proposal includes construction of 11.2 miles of road within the Deadwood Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA).

The Deadwood River drainage is located in the west-central mountains of Idaho, in Boise and Valley Counties, Townships 9-11 North and Ranges 6-8 East, Boise Meridian. Preliminary analysis has demonstrated that large numbers of stands are at risk from insect and disease epidemics and catastrophic wildfires. The Deadwood Ecosystem Analysis '96 timber sale proposes to treat timber stands in the southern portion of the Deadwood River drainage to reduce densities and increase stand diversity and, as a by-product of this

vegetative manipulation, provide wood fiber to the local economy.

Stands in the southern portion of the Deadwood River drainage were chosen for priority treatment because they are warmer and drier than stands in the northern portion. The southern portion has been identified by the Boise National Forest Hazard and Risk Assessment as at risk to catastrophic wildfire. Fire suppression and a limited amount of logging have been concentrated in this area. As a result, the stands (which previously had a fire return interval of approximately 20 years) have not burned as frequently as necessary to maintain resistance and resilience. In an effort to maintain ponderosa pine, an early seral species, within this ecosystem, stands capable of growing ponderosa pine have been selected for treatment. Additional stands which would not normally contain ponderosa pine will be treated to break up dense overstories and reduce stress, increasing growth rates and reducing the threat of insect attack and diseases and reducing the potential for catastrophic fires.

Proposed Action

Prescribed Fire Only—3,690 acres—to reduce on the ground fuels and stand densities. Burning would be at low intensity designed to stay on the ground and kill smaller trees. Some openings would be created, and a few areas may burn at moderate intensity, killing some larger trees. This includes 1,840 acres of the eligible Wild and Scenic river corridor.

Sanitation Salvage then Prescribed Fire—9,230 acres—to salvage dead, dying, insect infested and diseased trees. Dense pockets of trees in these stands would be thinned from below to remove the least fire resistant trees followed by prescribed fire.

Sanitation/Salvage with Precommercial Thinning Favoring Ponderosa Pine then Douglas-fir—900 acres—Dwarf mistletoe or bark beetle infested Douglas-fir stands would have the overstory removed except for those trees necessary for wildlife or large woody debris. There may be 1/2 to 3 acre openings created in heavily mistletoe infected and root rot affected areas. The understory will be precommercially thinned at a spacing which will range from 12 to 20 feet, depending on tree size. This precommercial thinning will retain ponderosa pine trees whenever available. If possible, fire will be used after the treatment.

Approximately 7,530 acres will be treated by selecting leave trees to create an uneven-aged stand primarily occupied by relatively large ponderosa

pine trees which are capable of producing seed for reproduction. Basal areas in these stands will be reduced to increase the resistance and resilience of the stands. These stands have been determined to be at risk to insects and disease attacks. By reducing densities, insect and disease infested trees, and/or trees of a certain species which may cause a stand to be unhealthy, the growth of the stands will improve and stress will be reduced. This treatment, described as "thinning from below" will be accomplished in the following ways:

1. Stands with several age/size classes of primarily ponderosa pine would be treated with density reduction. Young trees (8–14 inches d.b.h.) would be thinned to increase growth potential and reduce overcrowding. Trees in the 14- to 24-inch diameter class would also be thinned to encourage seed production. Some trees larger than 24 inches in diameter would be harvested if they show signs of disease, decay, or insect infestation. In areas where adequate ponderosa pine trees exist in all age/size classes, a small portion of large trees may be harvested to improve spacing and increase the economic viability of the timber sale.

2. In stands that contain a mix of species, the action would remove primarily Douglas-fir, allowing the ponderosa pine sufficient room to grow and reducing competition and stress within the stands.

3. Other stands are capable of growing ponderosa pine, but do not currently contain ponderosa pine due to successional changes. These stands currently contain primarily Douglas-fir. Where practical, stands would be treated to remove Douglas-fir and replanted with ponderosa pine. These activities would occur in small pockets where annosus root rot and dwarf mistletoe are occurring.

Precommercial and Commercial Thinning Favoring Lodgepole Pine—500 acres—thinned to 11-foot spacing. Slash will be jackpot burned.

Two to Five Acre Clearcuts—300 Total Acres—Small clearcuts would be used to break up the stands that have a continuous crown, remove the subalpine fir, and make the stands more resistant to natural fire. Stands would regenerate themselves with lodgepole pine.

Prescribed Fire in Subalpine Fir Habitats—700 acres—break up stands of dense subalpine fir which are highly susceptible to large stand destroying fires.

All treated stands would be prescribed burned following timber harvest or precommercial thinning. The prescribed fire would reduce fuels and

reduce the proportion of late seral tree species which are more susceptible to fire.

Issues and Alternatives

Previous scoping and public meetings have identified several issues. These issues include:

1. Road construction in the Deadwood IRA would develop the roadless area and reduce the acres that have a roadless character.

2. Logging activities in the Deadwood IRA would develop the roadless area and reduce acres that have a roadless character.

An alternative to eliminate the proposed road construction in the Deadwood IRA will be analyzed in detail.

Comments

Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing on or before September 9, 1996. Mail comments to, or for further information contact, Jackie Andrew, Lowman Ranger District, Boise National Forest, HC 77 Box 3020, Lowman, ID 83637, Telephone: 208–259–3361.

Public Involvement

The Deadwood Ecosystem Analysis '96 Project was proposed as a result of the Deadwood Landscape Analysis, completed in 1994. The Deadwood Landscape Analysis sought to analyze the current conditions within the Deadwood River drainage in contrast to the conditions believed to exist prior to logging, fire suppression, and drought which may have affected those conditions. This analysis was performed to comply with the National Forest Management Act. The analysis suggested that vegetative manipulation was warranted to restore the resistance and resilience of the ecosystem to catastrophic events such as fire, disease, and insect attack. Initial plans were to include all proposals for the Deadwood River drainage in a single Environmental Impact Statement. However, due to the complexity of the analysis, the area was divided into several project level environmental impact statements. In July 1995, P.L. 104–19 (Rescission Act) was signed into law. Since the Deadwood project contained an identifiable salvage component, the project was placed under the Rescission Act. The first project area to be analyzed was the southern portion, for which the Deadwood Salvage '96 Environmental Assessment was prepared. It was distributed for comment in April 1996. The Secretary of Agriculture issued clarification in July 1996. As a result,

Forest Supervisor David D. Rittenhouse has removed the Deadwood Salvage '96 project area from consideration under the Rescission Act. The Deadwood Ecosystem Analysis '96 project includes the same area analyzed as the Deadwood Salvage '96 Environmental Assessment.

Numerous public mailings, meetings and site visits were conducted to collect public comment and concerns during the preparation of the Landscape Analysis and Environmental Assessment.

Public/Agency Contacts

Contacts have been made with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding threatened and endangered species listed for the project area, and landowners in or near the project area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred with the Forest Service determination that the proposed action is not likely to affect threatened or endangered species.

Schedule

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be distributed in September 1996. The Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision is expected to be complete in November 1996.

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 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 stage but that are not raised until after the completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angood 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 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.

Responsible Official

David D. Rittenhouse, Forest Supervisor, Boise National Forest is the responsible official. He will decide if the area should be managed to reduce the risk of insect attack, disease, and wildfire and, if so, which proposal for treatment will be implemented.

Dated: August 5, 1996.

David D. Rittenhouse,
Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 96-20324 Filed 8-8-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

North Lochsa Face Vegetative Management; Clearwater National Forest; Idaho County, ID

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Clearwater National Forest will prepare an EIS (environmental impact statement) for vegetative management activities, within the North Lochsa Face analysis area, that will restore and maintain the health of forest ecosystems and support the economic and social needs of people and their communities. The analysis area is located on the Lochsa Ranger District on the Clearwater National Forest, headquartered in Orofino, Idaho.

The EIS will tier to the Clearwater National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Final EIS of September, 1987, which provides overall guidance of all land management activities on the Clearwater National Forest. Analyses will also be conducted in compliance with the Stipulation of Dismissal agreed to for the lawsuit between the Forest Service and the

Sierra Club, et al (signed September 13, 1993).

The agency invites written comments and suggestions on the issues and management opportunities for the area being analyzed.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received by no later than September 23, 1996, to receive timely consideration in the preparation of the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS is anticipated to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency in December 1996. The Final EIS and Record of Decision are expected to be issued in May 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments and suggestions on the proposed action or requests to be placed on the project mailing list to James L. Caswell, Forest Supervisor, Clearwater National Forest, 12730 U.S. Highway 12, Orofino, ID, 83544, FAX: 208-476-8329.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

(George Harbaugh, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Lochsa Ranger District, P.O. Box 398, Kooskia, ID 83539, telephone (208) 926-4275.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The North Lochsa Face analysis area covers approximately 128,000 acres of mostly forested, steep mountains on the Lochsa Ranger District. It lies between Highway 12 and the Lolo Motorway (Forest Road 500) just north of the small communities of Lowell and Syringa. Lewiston is 95 miles west of the area on Highway 12; Missoula is 130 miles to the east. The Lochsa River, a designated Wild and Scenic River, runs alongside Highway 12. The Lochsa District boundary and the Lolo Motorway form the north border of the analysis area. The Pete King Creek drainage forms the southwest boundary. Highway 12 and the Lochsa River form the south/southeast boundary up to Fish Creek, and the remaining boundary is the eastern watershed divide of Fish Creek.

The area is relatively isolated and undeveloped. However, U.S. Highway 12, the only highway in central Idaho that connects Washington and Montana, carries a great deal of traffic year-round. It is the primary route for trucks hauling grain, logs and other products from Montana and the northern tier of states, as well as southern Canada, to the shipping port of Lewiston. This route also provides the quickest crossing for passenger traffic from the Portland, Oregon, area to points in the northern tier of states. Recreation traffic on this highway, especially in the summer, can be heavy.

Two small communities, Lowell and Syringa, lie at the southern tip of the analysis area. Both offer motels and a

service station for highway travelers and tourists. Within a 60 mile radius of the analysis area lie the towns of Kooskia, Kamiah, Grangeville, Orofino, Pierce, Weippe, and Sites. All are primarily timber-dependent communities, whose economies are directly affected by Forest Service management. The analysis area is within Idaho County, but any activity in the analysis area would also affect those communities within adjacent Clearwater and Lewis Counties.

The Clearwater Forest Plan provides guidance through its goals, objectives, standards, guidelines and management area direction. The analysis area consists of Management Areas A6, A7, C3, C4, C6, C8S, E1, M1, and US, with inclusions of Management Area M2 in all areas. Below is a brief description of the applicable management direction.

Management Area A6—Historic Lolo Trail Corridor (11,262 acres)—Manage to provide opportunity for recreational activities oriented to traveling over, understanding, and appreciating the route as a historic travel route. Minimize timber harvest activity conflicts with recreation.

Management Area A7—Middle Fork of the Clearwater Wild and Scenic River Corridor (4,105 acres)—Protect and enhance scenic values, cultural values, water quality, big game, non-game, and fishery habitats with special emphasis on the anadromous fishery, and developed and dispersed recreation that will contribute to public use and enjoyment of the free flowing rivers and their immediate environment. Harvest timber when enhancement of key resources will occur and adverse impacts to key resources would be of low magnitude and short duration, and to achieve specific vegetation management objectives.

Management Area C3—Elk Winter Range (16,797 acres)—Provide winter forage and thermal cover for big-game. Classify this land as unsuitable for timber production.

Management Area C4—Elk Winter Range/Timber (14,979 acres)—Provide sufficient winter forage and thermal cover for existing and projected big game populations while achieving timber production outputs.

Management Area C6—Elk Summer Range (28,263 acres)—Protect the soil and water from adverse effects of man's activities. Classify this land as unsuitable for timber production.

Management Area C8S—Elk Summer Range/Timber (22,900 acres)—Manage these areas to maintain high quality wildlife and fishery objectives while producing timber from the productive Forest land.