

Information received will be used in preparation of the draft EIS and final EIS. For the most effective use, comments should be submitted to the Forest Service within 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice in the **Federal Register**.

The Responsible Official is Robert W. Ross, Jr., Director of Recreation and Lands, Intermountain Region, Ogden, Utah. The decision to be made is whether to exchange National Forest System lands for private lands that would be of equal appraised value and of benefit to the public. The draft EIS is expected to be available for public review in February 1998, with a final EIS estimated to be completed in May 1998. The comment period on the draft EIS 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 EIS's 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 chapter of the draft EIS. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft EIS or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the draft EIS. 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 received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215 or 217. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 10 days.

Dated: October 3, 1997.

Jack A. Blackwell,

Deputy Regional Forester, Intermountain Region, USDA Forest Service.

[FR Doc. 97-26790 Filed 10-9-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Big Bend Road Access, Wenatchee National Forest, Kittitas County, Washington

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Cancellation of an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: On May 19, 1994, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Big Bend Road Access on the Cle Elum Ranger District of the Wenatchee National Forest was published in the **Federal Register** (59 FR 26205). Forest Service has combined this access with another environmental analysis process. There will be no EIS for this specific road access project. The NOI is hereby rescinded.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Direct questions regarding this cancellation to Susan Carter, Environmental Coordinator, Wenatchee National Forest, 215 Melody Lane, Wenatchee, Washington 98801 or telephone 509-662-4335.

Dated: October 3, 1997.

Sonny J. O'Neal,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 97-26981 Filed 10-9-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Plum Creek Checkerboard Access Project, Wenatchee National Forest, Kittitas County, Washington

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The USDA, Forest Service, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of a site-specific proposal to issue easements and authorize construction of roads across National Forest System (NFS) lands located in the Yakima River Basin. The action is proposed in response to an application from Plum Creek Timber Company (PCTC) who seeks legal access to approximately 45 parcels of PCTC land within the Wenatchee National Forest boundary, on the Cle Elum and Naches Ranger Districts. The proposed access locations range from approximately 5 to 20 miles south and southeast, and 5 to 25 miles north and northeast of the town of Cle Elum, Washington, and both north and south of Interstate 90, east of Snoqualmie Pass.

The purpose of the EIS will be to develop and evaluate a range of alternatives including a No Action Alternative, to respond to issues identified during the scoping process. The proposed project will be in compliance with direction in the Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (March 1990) as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (April 1994), which provides the overall guidance for management of the area. The non-Federal lands involved are covered by PCTC's Cascade Habitat Conservation Plan (1996).

The agency invites written comments on the scope of this project. In addition, the agency gives notice of this analysis so that interested and affected people are aware of how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of this proposal must be received by November 5, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments and suggestions to Sonny J. O'Neal, Forest Supervisor, Wenatchee National

Forest, 215 Melody Lane, Wenatchee, Washington 98801.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions and comments about this EIS should be directed to Floyd Rogalski, Project Planner, Cle Elum Ranger District, 803 West Second Street, Cle Elum, Washington 98922; phone 509-674-4411, ext. 315.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Forest Service is initiating this action in response to an application filed by PCTC. The applicant requests permanent easements across NFS lands for the purpose of constructing and maintaining access roads to approximately 45 separate parcels of land owned by the PCTC. Because these lands form a "checkerboard" ownership pattern, the parcels to be accessed are surrounded by NFS lands; no legal road access to the sections currently exists.

The applicant seeks legal access pursuant to Section 1323 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The ANILCA directs the Forest Service to grant access to inholdings of non-Federal land within the National Forest boundary for the reasonable use and enjoyment of those lands by the landowner. The applicant has stated that it intends to manage the lands to be accessed for long term timber management under its approved Habitat Conservation Plan. The applicant intends to build roads on the authorized rights-of-way sufficient to support the intended use of the land. The proposed access involves a total of approximately 24 miles of road across 194 acres of NFS land in 45 different locations. These include the Gold Creek, Rock Creek, Little Naches, Big Creek, Little Creek, and North and South Forks and Taneum Creek drainages, all south of I-90 and Cle Elum, Washington; and lands to the east and west of Lakes Keechelus, Kachess and Cle Elum; Little Salmon La Sac Creek, Salmon La Sac Creek, Paris Creek, Boulder Creek and Fortune Creek in the Cle Elum River drainage; and the West Fork Teanaway River drainage; all north of I-90 and Cle Elum, Washington. Management allocations of the NFS lands under the Northwest Forest Plan are predominately Adaptive Management Area (Snoqualmie Pass AMA) and Late Successional Reserves, with some Matrix.

A range of alternative will be considered, including a no action alternative. Other alternatives will be developed in response to issues received during scoping.

The major issues that have been identified to date include: the impact to heritage resources; the potential

reduction in the spectrum of recreational opportunities currently available; the impact on the economy of the county; the impact to the roadless areas; the impact to late-successional habitat; and the impact to water quality.

Public participation will be especially important at several points during the analysis. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies, Tribes, and other organizations or individuals who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. This information will be used in preparation of the draft EIS. The scoping process includes:

1. Identifying potential issues.
2. Identifying issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Eliminating insignificant issues or those which have been covered by a relevant previous environmental process.
4. Exploring and identifying additional alternatives.
5. Identifying potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e. direct, indirect, and cumulative effects and connected actions).
6. Determining potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

Public meetings are not scheduled prior to the release of the draft EIS. Meetings will be held during the comment period between the draft and final EIS. The location of these meetings will be determined by the addresses on the project mailing list. Notice of meeting dates and locations will be published in the newspaper of record for the Wenatchee National Forest, *The Wenatchee World*, and the following localized newspapers: *Northern Kittitas County Tribune*; *Ellensburg Record*; and *Yakima Herald Republic*.

The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by December, 1997. 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 notice appears in the **Federal Register**.

Copies of the draft EIS will be distributed to interested and affected agencies, organizations, and members of the public for their review and comment. It is very important that those interested in the management of the Wenatchee National Forest participate at that time.

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 a draft EIS 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 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 EIS. 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).

The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in October 1998. 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 the decision regarding this proposal.

Sonny J. O'Neal, Forest Supervisor, Wenatchee National Forest, is the responsible official. The responsible official will document the decision and rationale for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest Service appeal regulations (36 CFR part 215).

Dated: October 3, 1997.

Sonny J. O'Neal,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 97-26982 Filed 10-9-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M