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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Analysis of Veteran/Boulder Project Area, Black Hills National Forest, Spearfish/Nemo Ranger District, Lawrence and Meade Counties, SD

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to 36 CFR 219.10(g), the District Ranger of the Spearfish/Nemo Ranger District, Black Hills National Forest, gives notice of the agency's intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the analysis of the Veteran/Boulder Project Area. The responsible official for this project is John C. Twiss, Forest Supervisor, Black Hills National Forest.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to District Ranger, Spearfish/Nemo Ranger District, Black Hills National Forest, 2014 N. Main, Spearfish, SD 57783.

DATES: This project schedule is as follows: File Draft EIS—May 1998 File Final EIS and Record of Decision signature—August 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Patricia Seay, Project Interdisciplinary Team Leader, 605-642-4622.

Additional information, such as maps, scoping summary and list of issues identified through the scoping process can be obtained by written request to the Spearfish Ranger District office, or by phone at the above address and phone number.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Timber harvest and associated activities within the Veteran/Boulder Project Area (27,463 acres) is proposed by the Spearfish/Nemo Ranger District. The 1997 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), which guides management of the Black Hills National Forest, identifies an allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of timber volume and a desired future condition of the

Forest that we are trying to achieve sometime in the future. The planning team has identified that there is a need, and opportunities exist, for activities which would move the project area toward the Desired Future Condition. Proposed activities include about 3700 acres of timber harvest, 2000 acres of prescribed burning, 9 miles of new road construction, 35 miles of road reconstruction, and about 65 miles of roads to be closed to motor vehicles. The project is predicted to generate about 15 million board feet of commercial timber and is intended to emphasize big game habitat and production of timber. It will also enhance hardwood stands and meadows to maintain diversity, create additional forage for big game, and treat pine stands to improve forest health.

This project area includes Beaver Park, an inventoried (RARE II) roadless area. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the 1997 Forest Plan did not recommend wilderness designation for Beaver Park, and placed this area into 4 different management emphasis areas. The majority of the area (2,637 acres) is to be managed for Backcountry Non-motorized Recreation, and is not part of the landbase considered suitable for timber harvest. Another 106 acres was placed into the Sturgis Experimental Watershed, an area set aside for watershed research, and is also not part of the suitable landbase. The remaining area was placed into the landbase considered suitable for timber harvest; 1,795 acres are to be managed for Limited Motorized Use and Forest Production Emphasis, and 571 acres are to be managed for Big Game Winter Range Emphasis.

This proposal does include timber harvest and new road construction within a portion of the former RARE II area, now to be managed for Limited Motorized Use and Forest Product Emphasis. Most of the known sites of mountain pine beetle infestations occurring within this project area are located within this management emphasis area.

The EIS will analyze the Proposed Action, a No Action Alternative and a third alternative that would not treat any area within the former RARE II boundary, including areas infested with mountain pine beetles.

The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be

a minimum of 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 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 provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Dated: April 1, 1998.

J. Thomas Millard,

District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 98-9453 Filed 4-9-98; 8:45 am]

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