

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service**

Pacific Northwest Region Douglas-Fir Tussock Moth Project, Colville, Okanogan, and Wenatchee National Forests in Washington; and Malheur, Fremont, Ochoco, Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman, and Winema National Forests in Oregon

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 disclose the potential environmental effects of proposed activities in forested lands infested with Douglas-fir tussock moth. Activities include no-action and short-term treatments with a biological insecticide to maintain existing desired stand structure and tree condition.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of this analysis should be received no later than July 19, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments to National Resource Staff; Air Management, Forest Insects and Diseases Group; Pacific Northwest Regional Office, PO Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208-3623.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bill Funk, Team Leader, Douglas-fir Tussock Moth Project, Pacific Northwest Regional Office, PO Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208-3623 by calling (503) 808-2984.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A. Need for the Proposal

The Douglas-fir tussock moth (DFTM) is a native insect, occurring in the Douglas-fir and true fir hosts throughout the west. Outbreaks of this insect are short and cyclic in nature, occurring approximately every 7 to 10 years. Sometimes outbreaks are widespread, and other times they are more localized. In Washington and Oregon, outbreaks of this insect occur east of the Cascades and most notably in northeastern Oregon, and north central and northeastern Washington. The last widespread outbreak, which caused significant damage, occurred in the early 1970s causing defoliation and tree mortality throughout about 700,000 acres in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. More localized, less dramatic outbreaks occurred in the early 1980s and 1990s. By the time noticeable defoliation occurs, it is too late to implement a management strategy if needed. As a result, following the outbreak in the early 1970s, a DFTM early warning

trapping system was put in place throughout eastern Washington and Oregon. This trapping system is used to monitor changes in the populations and give an advance indication of a potential outbreak, thus allowing land managers to do analysis and implement possible actions, as necessary, prior to severe visible defoliation. Data from the 1997 and 1998 trapping program indicate that there has been a significant increase in populations, particularly in northeastern Oregon and northcentral and northeastern Washington. Based on this information, a fairly widespread DFTM outbreak is anticipated involving several Forests, as well as other land ownerships, in 2000 and 2001; and this outbreak will be similar to the one experienced in 1972-1974.

Since the outbreak is anticipated to be widespread, we recognize that it is not realistic nor desirable to try to control or stop it. There is, however, opportunity to evaluate its impacts on specific areas where foliage protection and tree protection may be critical, and to evaluate effects of short-term management strategies.

DFTM larvae emerge in the spring and begin feeding on new needles of Douglas-firs and true firs. As the larvae get older they begin to feed on older needles, and in high populations, whole trees will be defoliated in a single year. Complete defoliation often results in tree mortality. The female moth has vestigial wings, and therefore, does not fly and disperse her eggs throughout the forest canopy as other forest defoliators might do. As a result, a DFTM outbreak has a patchy appearance, with pockets of heavy defoliation scattered throughout a larger area of light or moderate defoliation. The areas of heavy defoliation and mortality vary in size, but can often be 500-1000 acres.

This insect has a short-term outbreak cycle of four phases or years. This makes the timing of any short-term management options critical. During the first two phases, populations begin to increase. Widespread, significant defoliation occurs in the third phase when populations are very high. Significant defoliation also occurs during the fourth phase, but due to competition for available food and a natural virus, the population collapses naturally. For any short term treatment to be effective and provide foliage protection, it should be applied at, or before, the beginning of the third phase. The short-term cycle of the outbreak, and the immobility of the female make it possible to treat localized areas without concern about spread and re-invasion from adjacent untreated areas.

In addition to the impacts of defoliation and tree mortality, there is also the consideration of additional tree mortality from bark beetles attracted to trees weakened from defoliation. A current outbreak of Douglas-fir bark beetle in parts of the area under consideration makes this a particular concern.

The hairs on the bodies of the larvae and the cocoon cases of this insect are irritating hairs that cause welts, rashes and reactions in many people when they are exposed to this insect. This reaction is called tussockosis. The level of reaction is dependent on individual sensitivity.

The purpose of this EIS is to identify those areas where foliage and stand structure must be protected to maintain the integrity of existing conditions, such as critical habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive species, and late and successional old-growth reserves; or to reduce impacts of the insect and defoliation on the human environment, such as campgrounds, administrative sites, or foreground aesthetics. It will evaluate the impacts of short-term management options, should treatment be necessary. There are two insecticides that are currently registered and will be considered in the analysis. Both are biological insecticides. One insecticide uses *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki*, which is bacterium-based, and affects some of the lepidopteran (moth and butterfly) species. The second insecticide employs a nucleopolyhedrosis virus specific to DFTM, and which affects a few other closely related species, such as the rusty tussock moth.

B. Proposed Action

The Pacific Northwest Region will be preparing an EIS to evaluate short-term suppression of a potential DFTM outbreak using a biological insecticide, to protect specific areas and habitats, such as riparian habitats of isolated bull trout populations, high value recreation sites and administrative sites. The intent is only to look at short-term strategies. Long-term strategies are addressed in longer term management plans.

C. Proposed Scoping

Public participation is an important part of the analysis. The scoping period associated with this Notice of Intent will be thirty (30) days in length, beginning the day after publication of this notice. In addition to this scoping, the public may visit Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision.

The Forest Service is seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State and local agencies, tribes, and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. Comments submitted during the scoping process should be in writing. They should be specific to the action being proposed and should describe as clearly and completely as possible any issues the commentator has with the proposal. This input will be used in preparation of the draft EIS.

D. Preliminary Issues Identified to Date

Preliminary issues that have been identified are:

- The impacts of the DFTM outbreak and subsequent defoliation and tree mortality, and the proposed treatment options, on habitats for threatened, endangered or sensitive species.
- The impacts of defoliation on remaining stands of limited late and old growth structure in many of the Forests.
- The impacts of the DFTM on the human environment such as recreation areas, and residential and administrative sites, along with the issues of tussockosis, aesthetics and water quality.
- The response and concerns of the proposed insecticide treatments which will be considered, and the impacts and risk of these treatments to humans and the environment.
- The significant concern over the impact of numerous forest health related problems that have already been occurring, especially in the Blue Mountain forests, such as the past western spruce budworm outbreak, and an ongoing Douglas-fir bark beetle outbreak, and high amounts of existing fuels, and loss of timber.

E. Alternatives Considered

The No Action alternative will serve as a baseline for comparison of alternatives. This alternative will be no change from current management of the Forests and will be fully developed and analyzed. The proposed action, as described above will be consider and other alternatives developed around the proposed action to address issues identified in the scoping and public involvement process.

F. Estimated Dates for Draft and Final EIS

The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public comment by October 1999. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA 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 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 objectives that could be raised at the draft EIS stage but that are not raised until after the 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 Heritage, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334 (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 the 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. Reviewer 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.

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 may not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215. 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 very limited

circumstances, such as 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 a specified number of days.

Comments on the draft EIS will be analyzed, considered, and responded to by the Forest Service in preparing the final EIS. The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in February 2000. The Regional Forester is the responsible official and as such will consider comments, responses, environmental consequences discussed in the final EIS, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making a decision regarding this proposed action. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the Pacific Northwest Region Douglas-fir Tussock Moth Project in the Record of Decision. That will be subject Forest Service Appeal Regulations (36 CFR Part 215).

Dated: June 11, 1999.

Nancy Graybeal,

Acting Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region.

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COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List Additions and Deletions

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Additions to and deletions from the Procurement List.

SUMMARY: This action adds to the Procurement List services to be furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities, and deletes from the Procurement List commodities previously furnished by such agencies.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 19, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, Crystal Gateway 3, Suite 310, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22202-4302.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Beverly Milkman (703) 603-7740.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On February 26 and May 7, 1999, the Committee for Purchase From People