

including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Use of Comment

All comments, including name and address when provided, will become a matter of public record. Comments received in response to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval.

Dated: June 17, 1999.

Robert Lewis, Jr.,

Deputy Chief for Research & Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Swan Flat Proposed Timber Sale; Cache National Forest (Administered by the Caribou National Forest), Bear Lake County, Idaho

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The USDA, Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to document the analysis and disclose the environmental impacts of proposed actions to harvest timber, build roads, and regenerate new stands of trees in the Swan Flat area of the Cache National Forest in Bear Lake County, Idaho. The proposed project is located in T.16S., R.42E., Section 23, 24, 25, and T.116S., R. 43E., Section 30, Boise Meridian. Implementing the silvicultural prescriptions under the proposed action will bring these timber stands to a healthy and productive condition. This would result in reduction of insect and disease activity, increased growth on regenerated stands, and provide a more uniform age and size distribution of timber stands.

On July 7, 1997, the Montpelier Ranger District released to the public, the Swan Flat Environmental Assessment for a 30 day predecisional review. After reviewing the responses of the predecisional review, the Montpelier Ranger District determined that an Environmental Impact Statement

would be needed to address entering the Swan Creek Mountain Roadless Area.

The Montpelier Ranger District of the Caribou National Forest proposes to harvest an estimated 1.5 million board feet of commercial timber in 13 stands on 291 acres. A total of 5 acres would be clear cut. The remaining stands would be partially cut using thinning, sanitation /salvage, group seed tree, shelterwood and improvement cut. All stands would be tractor logged. Approximately 1.3 miles of the Swan Flat Road from the junction of U.S. Highway 89 in Logan Canyon would be graveled. Approximately 1.5 miles of the Swan Flat Road from the junction of the Red Sinks Road would be realigned to enhance log hauling. Four hundred feet of the Swan Flat Road from the Red Sinks Road junction would be spot graveled. Approximately 0.5 miles of road construction would be needed within the area designated as located by the Caribou National Forest Lane and Resource Management Plan. All newly constructed roads within the goaded area would be obligated at the completion of the logging operation. Eight of the proposed cutting units are located in the Swan Creek Mountain Roadless Area. These cutting units are located on the fringe of the roadless area and adjacent to the existing Swan Flat Road and Red Sinks Road. Timber would be skidded to these existing roads. There would be no road construction in the Swan Creek Mountain Inventoried Road less Area.

The following preliminary issues have been identified:

- Regeneration cutting in deer and elk travel routes would compromise security cover.
- Eight of the proposed cutting units are located in the Swan Creek Mountain Roadless Area. Harvest activities would affect roadless characteristics.
- Regenerations cutting could effect the quality of winter recreational activities for cross-country skiers now and in the future.

The following alternatives have been developed:

Alternative 1 is the no action alternative.

Alternative 2 is the proposal. Under this alternative an estimated 1.5 million board feet of sawtimber would be removed from 265 acres.

Alternative 3 would address the winter recreation concerns. Under this alternative 1.1 million board feet of sawtimber would be removed from 307 areas.

Alternative 4 would address the concerns about wildlife corridors. Under this proposal 1.5 million board

feet of sawtimber would be removed from 291 acres.

This proposed sale is scheduled to be offered in 2001. For maps of the proposed project area, please contact the Montpelier Range District, 322 North 4th Street, Montpelier, Idaho 83254.

DATES: Written comments concerning the scope of the analysis described in this Notice should be received on or before July 23, 1999. No scoping meetings are planned at this time. Information received will be used in preparation of the draft EIS and final EIS.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Caribou National Forest, Montpelier Ranger District, 322 North 4th Street, Montpelier, Idaho 83254.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Questions concerning the proposed action and EIS should be directed to Eric Mattson, Caribou National Forest, Montpelier Ranger District, 322 N. 4th Street, Montpelier, Idaho 83254 (Telephone: (208) 847-0375).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Forest Service is seeking information and comments from Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as individuals and organizations who may be interested in, or affected by the proposed action. The Forest Service invites written comments and suggestions on the issues related to the proposal and the area being analyzed.

The responsible official is Jerry B. Reese, Supervisor, Caribou National Forest, 250 South Fourth Avenue, Pocatello, Idaho 83254.

The decision to be made is: Whether the proposed stands shall be brought under management (i.e. change from the management of natural succession to management activities that would achieve multiple-use goals) by cutting the sawtimber in each stand? If so, what cutting methods should be applied to each stand and what mitigation may be necessary?

The tentative date for filing the Draft EIS is October 1, 1999. The tentative date for filing the final EIS is January 5, 2000. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be open for 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 viewers 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 alert an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but 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 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement 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. Agency representatives and other interested people are invited to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the EIS process.

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. 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. 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: June 14, 1999.

Jerry B. Reese,

Forest Supervisor, Caribou National Forest, Intermountain Region, USDA Forest Service.
[FR Doc. 99-15885 Filed 6-22-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Housing Service

Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Rural Housing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed collection; comments requested.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Rural Housing Service's (RHS) intention to request an extension for a currently approved information collection in support of the program for "Self-Help Technical Assistance Grants" (RD Instruction 1944-I).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by August 23, 1999 to be assured of consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lucia A. McKinney, Senior Loan Specialist, Single Family Housing Direct Loan Division, Rural Housing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ag Box 0783, Washington, DC 20250, Telephone (202) 720-1457.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Self-Help Technical Assistance Grants.

OMB Number: 0575-0043.

Expiration Date of Approval: September 30, 1999.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: This subpart set forth the policies and procedures and delegates authority for providing Technical Assistance funds to eligible applicants to finance programs of technical and supervisory assistance for self-help housing, as authorized under Section 523 of the Housing Act of 1949 loan program under 42 U.S.C. 1472. This financial assistance may pay part of all of the cost of developing, administering or coordinating program of technical and supervisory assistance to aid very low- and low-income families in

carrying out self-help housing efforts in rural areas. The primary purpose is to fund organizations that are willing to locate and work with families that otherwise do not qualify as homeowners, are below the 50 percent of median incomes, and living in substandard housing.

RHS will be collecting information from non-profit organizations to enter into grant agreements. These non-profit organizations will give technical and supervisory assistance, and in doing so, they must develop a final application for Section 523 grant funds. This application includes Agency forms that contain essential information for making a determination of eligibility.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting for this collection of information is estimated to average .91 hours per response.

Respondents: Individual or households.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 100.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 34.35.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 3,121 hours.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Jean Mosley, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch at (202) 692-0041.

Comments: Comments are invited on:

(a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of Rural Housing Service, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of Rural Housing Service's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to Jean Mosley, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Ag Box 0742, Washington, D.C. 20250. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.