

Improving Transparency and Participation

In considering PPQ's commodity pest risk analysis process as it relates to rulemaking, the safeguarding review team concluded that the process is hampered by inadequate risk communication on the part of APHIS, which leads to conflicting interpretations about the nature and significance of risks. The final report recommended that PPQ incorporate stakeholder collaboration and scientific consultation into its pest risk analysis process. By increasing the transparency of the process and providing an opportunity for interested parties to participate prior to rulemaking, this collaboration and consultation would likely increase the amount and quality of information available to the risk assessors.

As a first step in our initiative to obtain customer and stakeholder feedback on ways to improve PPQ's commodity pest risk analysis process, we are soliciting public comment on these subjects. With regard to the preparation of commodity pest risk assessments, we are particularly interested in comments in the following areas:

- *Qualitative versus quantitative risk assessments.* The qualitative and quantitative pest risk assessments prepared by PPQ are similar in most respects. Both types of assessment identify quarantine pests and utilize qualitative ratings in their assessments of the consequences of introduction. Where they differ is in assessing the likelihood of introduction: Qualitative assessments utilize qualitative ratings for the likelihood of introduction, while quantitative assessments estimate the likelihood of introduction using scenario analysis and Monte Carlo simulation to arrive at a numerically expressed distribution of estimates (e.g., mean, mode, median, 95th percentile) for the likelihood of pest introduction. The safeguarding report notes that PPQ currently uses the less complex qualitative pest risk assessments for routine commodity import decisions and quantitative pest risk assessments for more complex commodity import decisions. However, in the absence of specific criteria for differentiating between routine and complex commodity import decisions, PPQ managers must rely on their judgment in determining what type of pest risk assessment should be used. With that in mind, what specific criteria could be used for determining which type of risk assessment is appropriate in a given situation?

- *Preparation of assessments.* The safeguarding report recommended allowing exporters or exporting countries to conduct pest risk assessments under APHIS guidance as a means of expediting the handling of requests for commodities to be allowed entry into the United States. Would this be acceptable, or would the perception that there is an inherent conflict of interest be too great? Would strict adherence by the preparer to the risk assessment guidelines of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and subsequent APHIS review and approval be enough to overcome that perception?

With regard to the issue of transparency and public participation, we are particularly interested in comments in the following areas:

- *Notification of the initiation of a pest risk analysis.* It has been suggested that APHIS publish a notice in the **Federal Register** to notify the public whenever PPQ initiates a pest risk analysis pursuant to a request for a commodity to be allowed entry into the United States. Would such a notification mechanism be useful? Should notice be given of all requests received, *i.e.*, those involving both routine and nonroutine decisions, or should such **Federal Register** notices be reserved for the more complex nonroutine decisions? Could this notification be satisfactorily provided through means other than the **Federal Register**?

- *Web-based tracking system.* PPQ's plant pest and biotechnology permitting staffs currently administer Internet-accessible tracking systems that allow the public to check on the status of permit applications submitted to those staffs. (The tracking systems of the plant pest and biotechnology permitting staffs may be found on APHIS' Internet home page at www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/bats/permits/query-permits.html and www.aphis.usda.gov/bbep/bp/status.html, respectively.) We believe that a similar web-based tracking system could be used to enhance the transparency of, and facilitate participation in, the commodity pest risk analysis development process. Such a system would provide the public with timely information about the receipt of import petitions, the status of those petitions, and the status of their associated pest risk analyses, and could provide a mechanism for the public to offer information and feedback regarding those petitions and pest risk analyses. Would such a tracking system be useful? Would the existence of a web-based tracking system preclude the need for APHIS to publish notices in the

Federal Register as discussed in the previous item?

You may submit your written comments to the address provided at the beginning of this notice under the heading **ADDRESSES**. In addition, we will be hosting a public meeting to provide interested persons a full opportunity to orally present any data, views, suggestions, and questions. The public meeting will be held on November 10, 1999, at the Washington Court Hotel, Sagamore Hill Room, 525 New Jersey Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

A representative of APHIS will preside at the public meeting. Any interested person may appear and be heard in person, by attorney, or by other representative. Written statements may be submitted and will be made part of the meeting record. Persons who wish to speak at the meeting will be asked to provide their name and organization. We ask that anyone who reads a statement or submits a written statement provide two copies to the presiding officer at the meeting.

Registration for the public meeting will take place from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. at the meeting room. The public meeting will begin at 10 a.m. and is scheduled to end at 5 p.m., local time. However, the meeting may be terminated at any time after it begins if all persons desiring to speak have been heard. If the number of speakers at the meeting warrants it, the presiding officer may limit the time for presentations so that everyone wishing to speak has the opportunity.

We welcome all comments on the issues discussed above and encourage the submission of ideas on any associated topics or other suggestions for the evaluation of risk and the improvement of our risk analysis processes. We will consider all comments and recommendations we receive in response to this notice as part of our Business Practices Team review initiative and the related safeguarding report implementation efforts.

Done in Washington, DC, this 4th day of October, 1999.

Bobby R. Acord,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 99-26360 Filed 10-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

East Slate Project; Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Shoshone County, ID

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The St. Joe Ranger District of the Idaho Panhandle National Forest is considering vegetation activities in the East Slate Project. The project area is located approximately one mile west of the town of Avery on the St. Joe River.

The interdisciplinary team has reviewed the current conditions which indicated the project area could benefit from treatment. The purpose and need is summarized below.

1. Reduce the risk of blending genetic material from poorly adapted, non-local ponderosa pine trees planted earlier this century with that of the native ponderosa pine. Replace the poorly adapted trees with more sustainable native species.

2. Speed development of larger stand structures with large trees and reverse the trend toward increasing dominance by mid and late succession species.

3. Maintain larch dominance where it is a significant stand component.

4. Promote vegetation structures and compositions that are more consistent with those which naturally occur under fire and pathogen disturbance regimes.

5. Restore western white pine.

6. Contribute wood to the local timber supply when timber is feasible and cost effective and can help achieve landscape objectives.

7. Improve big game wildlife habitat.

8. Promote conditions for safe and effective control of prescribed fires and wildfires.

9. Provide a safer vehicle turn-around at gate on Road #1934.

The project consists of vegetation management, including timber harvesting and associated road construction and prescribed burning. It also plans for wildlife habitat improvement and natural fuels reduction through burning.

DATES: Comments should be postmarked on or before November 8, 1999. Please include your name and address and the name of the project you are commenting on.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments and suggestions on the proposed management activities or request to be placed on Project mailing list to George Bain, District Ranger, St. Joe Ranger District, PO Box 407, St. Maries, ID 83802. George Bain is the Responsible Official.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Pete Ratcliffe, Project Team Leader, St. Joe Ranger District, (208) 245-4517.

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 Parts 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 may be granted in only very 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.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Vegetation Management

Vegetation management under this proposal is designed to meet several needs, including providing timber products to local markets, protecting and enhancing wildlife forage and cover needs, providing for long term growth and yield as directed in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Forest Plan, increasing fire resiliency, reducing fire hazards, and moving the vegetation to the conditions the area historically had in terms of tree species composition and density. Treatment include:

Approximately 406 acres of commercial timber harvesting including commercial thinning, shelterwood preparation and seed cuttings, liberation cuts, sanitation cuts and clearcuts. This would include an estimated 235 acres of clearcuts with reserves, 86 acres of commercial thinning, 18 acres of liberation cuts, 21 acres of sanitation salvage, 19 acres of seedtree harvest and 27 acres of shelterwood harvest with reserves.

Approximately 240 acres of brush field burning for maintenance of big game browse and wildlife habitat improvement.

Approximately 203 acres would be treated for natural fuels reduction.

Approximately 1.6 miles of road construction to access timber harvesting units.

Preliminary Issues

We expect issues and concerns with this project to include the impacts on wildlife, fish, water quality, and recreation, as well as road construction,

clearcutting and economic feasibility. Issues will be developed and analyzed based on public comment and the interdisciplinary team's analysis of effects on resources. Alternatives will be developed to modify or eliminate the impacts from proposed activities and still meet the purpose for this project.

Additionally, some of the vegetation treatment may result in opening of over 60 acres. While we would like comments that would affect alternatives early, comments on the size of openings and their effects will be accepted for 60 days after publication of this notice.

The draft environmental impact statement is expected to be filed with the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and available for public review in December 1999. The final environmental impact statement is expected to be completed in March 2000.

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 an alerts and agency to the reviewer's position and contentions.

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC, 435 U.S. 519, 533 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental 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 concern 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. Reviews 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.

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To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

Dated: September 29, 1999.

George Bain,

St. Joe District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 99-26242 Filed 10-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Northwest Sacramento Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC)

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Northwest Sacramento Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) will meet on Wednesday, October 13, and Thursday, October 14, 1999. Wednesday's meeting will start at the Lake County Special Districts Office, 230 N. Main Street, Lakeport, California. This meeting will consist of a field trip, starting from the office at 10:00 a.m. and adjourning at 4:00 p.m. The objective of the field trip is to view the watershed restoration projects and discuss the siltation issues at Rodman Slough, and Scotts and Middle Creeks. The meeting on Thursday will start at 9:00 a.m. at the Ukiah Bureau of Land Management Field Office, 2550 North State Street, Ukiah, California. An update on Northwest Forest Plan activities in Portland and preparation for the Redding meeting of the Northwest Sacramento PAC are on the agenda.

Public comment periods will be held throughout both days. All PAC meetings are open to the public. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Connie Hendryx, USDA, Klamath National Forest, 1312 Fairlane Road, Yreka, California 96097; telephone 530-841-4468; TDD (530) 841-4573; email: chendryx/r5_klamath@fs.fed.us.

Dated: October 1, 1999.

Nancy J. Gibson,

Administrative Officer.

[FR Doc. 99-26282 Filed 10-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List, Proposed Additions

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

ACTION: Proposed additions to Procurement List.

SUMMARY: The Committee has received proposals to add to the Procurement List commodities and services to be furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE: November 8, 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: This notice is published pursuant to 41 U.S.C. 47(a)(2) and 41 CFR 51-2.3. Its purpose is to provide interested persons an opportunity to submit comments on the possible impact of the proposed actions.

If the Committee approves the proposed additions, all entities of the Federal Government (except as otherwise indicated) will be required to procure the commodities and services listed below from nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

I certify that the following action will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. The major factors considered for this certification were:

1. The action will not result in any additional reporting, recordkeeping or other compliance requirements for small

entities other than the small organizations that will furnish the commodities and services to the Government.

2. The action will result in authorizing small entities to furnish the commodities and services to the Government.

3. There are no known regulatory alternatives which would accomplish the objectives of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (41 U.S.C. 46-48c) in connection with the commodities and services proposed for addition to the Procurement List. Comments on this certification are invited. Commenters should identify the statement(s) underlying the certification on which they are providing additional information.

The following commodities and services have been proposed for addition to Procurement List for production by the nonprofit agencies listed:

Commodities

Postage Meter

7490-00-NSH-0001

NPA: Southeast Keller Corporation, Houston, Texas

Bag, Waste Receptacle

8105-01-284-2924

NPA: Vantech Enterprises, Vancouver, Washington

Services

Base Supply Center and Operation of Individual Equipment Element Store

Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas

NPA: Alphapointe Association for the Blind, Kansas City, Missouri

Food Service Attendant

Delaware Air National Guard Base, New Castle County Airport, New Castle, Delaware

NPA: Elwyn, Inc., Concordville, Pennsylvania at its facility in Aston, Pennsylvania

Beverly L. Milkman,

Executive Director.

[FR Doc. 99-26369 Filed 10-7-99; 8:45 am]

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COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED PROCUREMENT LIST ADDITIONS

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

ACTION: Additions to the Procurement List.