

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns regarding 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 environmental impact 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.

Public scoping for this project was initiated in April 1997 with a proposed action to treat roughly 6,600 acres. At this time the project was titled the Myrtle-Ball Environmental Assessment (EA) and the assessment area encompassed nearly 49,000 acres. In October 1997 the assessment area was reduced to 31,000 acres, the proposed treatment area reduced to 3,700 acres, and the project renamed the Myrtle-Cascade EA. Based on scoping and changes in Agency direction the Forest Service believes an EIS is now the appropriate level of documentation. Any comments received in response to previous solicitations regarding this project will be considered during the environmental analysis and will be part of the public record. Anyone on the previous mailing list will be added to the EIS mailing list.

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 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 a specified number of days.

I am the responsible official for this environmental analysis. My address is Bonners Ferry Ranger District, Route 4 Box 4860, Bonners Ferry, ID 83805-9764.

Dated: November 10, 1999.

**Elaine J. Zieroth,**

*District Ranger.*

[FR Doc. 99-30160 Filed 11-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Gravina Island Timber Sales Environmental Impact Statement

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

**SUMMARY:** Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to provide timber for the Tongass National Forest timber sale program. The Record of Decision will disclose how the Forest Service decides to provide harvest units, roads, and associated timber harvesting facilities. The proposed action is to harvest up to an estimated 40 million board feet (mmnbf) of timber on an estimated 1800 acres in several timber sales. The project area is located within Gravina roadless area (#522) as inventoried in the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. A range of alternatives responsive to significant issues will be developed and will include a no-action alternative. The proposed timber harvest is located within Tongass Forest Plan Value Comparison Units 7610, 7630, 7640, 7650 on Gravina Island, Alaska, on the Ketchikan Ranger District/Misty Fiords National Monument of the Tongass National Forest.

**DATES:** Opportunities for comment will be made available throughout the process and are identified below. In order to take full advantage of scheduled comment periods, individuals interested in receiving a scoping package should contact us by December 1, 1999. Further opportunities for comment will be provided following development of a specific agency proposed action, during alternative development and following release of the Draft EIS.

**ADDRESSES:** Please send written comments to District/Monument Ranger, Ketchikan Ranger District/Misty

Fiords National Monument, 3031 Tongass Avenue, Ketchikan, AK 99901.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions about the proposal and EIS should be directed to Jerry Ingersoll, District/Monument Ranger, Ketchikan Ranger District/Misty Fiords National Monument, Tongass National Forest, 3031 Tongass Ave., Ketchikan, AK 99901 telephone (907) 228-4100 or Susan Marthaller, NEPA Coordinator, Ketchikan Ranger District/Misty Fiords National Monument, 3031 Tongass Ave., Ketchikan, AK 99901 telephone (907) 228-4124.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Public participation will be an integral component of the study process and will be especially important at several points during the analysis. The first is during the scoping process. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, local and tribal agencies, individuals and organizations that may be interested in, or affected by, the proposed activities. The scoping process will include: (1) Identification of potential issues; (2) identification of issues to be analyzed in depth; and (3) elimination of insignificant issues or those which have been covered by a previous environmental review and (4) suggestions for possible alternatives.

Opportunities to provide both written and verbal comment and to provide feedback on the process will be made available. A series of public meetings will be scheduled and a scoping package sent to the project mailing list. This active scoping will begin with the publication of the NOI and continue through preparation of a draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS).

Based on results of scoping and the resource capabilities within the project area, alternatives including a "no action" alternative will be developed for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS). The Draft EIS is projected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in late March 2000 or early April 2000. Subsistence hearings, as provided for in Title VIII, Section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), will be planned, if needed, during the comment period on the Draft EIS. The Final EIS is anticipated by October 2000.

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).

Environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage 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 of the proposed action, comments during scoping and 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. 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. Requesters should be

aware that, under FOIA, 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 7 days.

Permits: Permits required for implementation may include the following:

1. U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
  - Approval of discharge of dredged or fill material into the waters of the United States under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act;
  - Approval of the construction of structures or work in navigable waters of the United States under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899;
2. Environmental Protection Agency
  - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (402) Permit;
  - Review Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan;
3. State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources
  - Tideland Permit and Lease or Easement;
4. State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation
  - Solid Waste Disposal Permit;
  - Certification of Compliance with Alaska Water Quality Standards (401 Certification)

#### Responsible Official

Thomas Puchlerz, Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest, Federal Building, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901, is the responsible official. The responsible official will consider the comments, response, disclosure of environmental consequences, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making the decision and stating the rationale in the Record of Decision.

Dated: November 3, 1999.

**Thomas Puchlerz,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

[FR Doc. 99-30076 Filed 11-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

#### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

##### Rural Telephone Bank

##### Determination of the 1999 Fiscal Year Interest Rates on Rural Telephone Bank Loans

AGENCY: Rural Telephone Bank, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of 1999 fiscal year interest rates determination.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with 7 CFR 1610.10, the Rural Telephone Bank (Bank) fiscal year 1999 cost of money rates have been established as follows: 6.01% and 5.54% for advances from the liquidating account and financing account, respectively (fiscal year is the period beginning October 1 and ending September 30).

Except for loans approved from October 1, 1987, through December 21, 1987, where borrowers elected to remain at interest rates set at loan approval, all loan advances made during fiscal year 1999 under Bank loans approved in fiscal years 1988 through 1991 shall bear interest at the rate of 6.01% (the liquidating account rate). All loan advances made during fiscal year 1999 under Bank loans approved during or after fiscal year 1992 shall bear interest at the rate of 5.54% (the financing account rate).

The calculation of the Bank's cost of money rates for fiscal year 1999 for the liquidating account and the financing account are provided in Tables 1 and 2. Since the calculated rates are greater than the minimum rate (5.00%) allowed under 7 U.S.C. § 948(b)(3)(A), the cost of money rates for the liquidating account and financing account are set at 6.01% and 5.54%, respectively. The methodology required to calculate the cost of money rates is established in 7 CFR 1610.10(c).

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jonathan P. Claffey, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1590, South Building, Washington, DC 20250, telephone number (202) 720-9556.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 ("Credit Reform") (2 U.S.C. § 661a, *et seq.*) implemented a system to reform the budgetary accounting and management of Federal credit programs. Bank loans approved on or after October 1, 1991, are accounted for in a different manner than Bank loans approved prior to fiscal year 1992. As a result, the Bank must calculate two cost of money rates: (1) The cost of money rate for advances made from the liquidating account (advances made during fiscal year 1999 on loans approved prior to fiscal year 1992) and (2) the cost of money rate for advances made during fiscal year 1999 on loans approved on or after October 1, 1991 (otherwise referred to as loans from the financing account).

The cost of money rate methodology is the same for both accounts. It develops a weighted average rate for the