

and applicable laws, regulations and policies in making a decision regarding this proposal. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in a Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to appeal under 36 CFR part 215.

The responsible official is John R. Schultz, District Ranger, Allegheny National Forest, Bradford Ranger District, HC 1, Box 88, Bradford, PA 16701.

Dated: April 24, 2001.

**Dale Dunshie,**

*Acting Forest Supervisor,*

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**BILLING CODE 3410-11-U**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Upper Middle Fork Payette River Project, Boise National Forest, Idaho

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

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

**SUMMARY:** The Cascade Ranger District of the Boise National Forest will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a resource management project in the Middle Fork of the Payette River. The entire project area is located within watersheds that drain directly into the Middle Fork of the Payette River or its tributaries. The project area is located 12 miles east of Cascade, Idaho, and about 100 miles north of Boise, Idaho.

The agency invites written comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis. The agency also hereby gives notice of the environmental analysis and decision-making process that will occur on the proposal so interested and affected people are aware of how they may participate and contribute to the final decision. At this time, no public meetings to discuss the project are planned.

**Proposed Action:** Two primary objectives have been identified for the project: (1) Reduce current and future stand susceptibility to western spruce budworm, Douglas-fir beetle, and mountain pine beetle by moving stand densities, structures, and/or species compositions towards their historic conditions, and; (2) improve long-term stand growth to or near levels indicative of healthy, sustainable forests.

The Proposed Action would treat an estimated 881 acres in the 15,881 acre project area. Proposed activities would occur within a portion of the 67,637 acre Gold Fork/Clear Creek Management Area 53. An estimated 4.0 MMbf of

timber would be harvested using ground-based (697 acres), skyline (24 acres), and helicopter (160 acres) yarding systems. The Proposed Action would employ a variety of silvicultural prescriptions including commercial thin (169 acres), improvement cut/sanitation (430 acres), seed cut shelterwood (95 acres), final removal shelterwood (147 acres), and clearcut with reserve trees (40 acres). The existing transportation system would be improved to facilitate log haul and reduce sedimentation with individual sections of 3.3 miles of road being reconstructed. An estimated 0.5 miles of specified road and 0.2 miles of temporary road would be constructed to facilitate harvest. In addition, 0.7 miles of the #409F road, currently closed year-round, would be decommissioned.

**Preliminary Issues:** Preliminary concerns with the Proposed Action include: (1) Potential impacts on sediment delivery to area streams; (2) potential impacts on bull trout, and; (3) potential impacts on the visual quality of the area.

**Possible Alternatives to the Proposed Action:** One alternative to the Proposed Action has been discussed thus far: (1) a no action alternative. Other alternatives will likely be developed as issues are identified and information received.

**Decisions to be Made:** The Boise National Forest Supervisor will decide the following. Should roads be built and timber harvested within the project area at this time, and if so; where within the project area, and how many miles of road should be built; and which stands should be treated and what silvicultural systems should be used? What design features and/or mitigation measures should be applied to the project? Should the decommissioning of existing roads be implemented at this time?

**DATES:** Written comments concerning the proposed project and analysis are encouraged and should be postmarked on or before June 11, 2001.

**Schedule:** Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), July 2001. Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), September 2001.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be addressed to Keith Dimmett, Cascade Ranger District, P.O. Box 696, Cascade, ID 83611. Comments received in response to this request will be available for public inspection and will be released in their entirety if requested pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Further information can be obtained from Keith Dimmett at the address

mentioned above or by calling (208) 382-7430.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The NFMA planning for this project was initiated in the spring of 2001 with the Upper Middle Fork Payette River Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale (EAWS). A letter announcing plans to complete the EAWS and soliciting comments was mailed to interest individuals and/or groups in March of 2001.

Roughly 70 percent of the project area occurs within one of two inventoried roadless areas (IRA's). A portion of the Peace Rock IRA occupies an estimated 8,947 acres, and a section of the Stony Meadows IRA another 2,357 acres of the project area. A large portion of the project area also occurs within Management Area 43 (Peace Rock). The Proposed Action does not include any management activities within either IRA or within Management Area 43.

The Middle Fork Payette River originates within, and runs through the center of the project area. The Forest Plan discloses that that segment of the river from Railroad Pass to the Middle Fork Bridge on the #409 road is potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River system as a "wild" river. However, in June of 1991 the Forest Plan was corrected to show that this segment of the river is potentially eligible as a "recreational" river.

The comment period on the DEIS will be 45 days from the date of 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 the DEIS 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 DEIS stage but are not raised until after completion of the FEIS may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F. 2d 1016, 1002 (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 DEIS 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 FEIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the DEIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft 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.

*Responsible Official:* Anne F. Archie, Acting Forest Supervisor, Boise National Forest, 1249 South Vinnell Way, Boise, ID 83709.

Dated: May 3, 2001.

**Anne F. Archie,**

*Acting Forest Supervisor.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

**Idaho Panhandle/Kootenai/Lolo National Forests Grizzly Bear Forest Plan Amendment; Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai and Lolo National Forests; Lincoln and Sanders Counties, MT; Boundary and Bonner Counties; Idaho; and Pend Oreille County, WA**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement to amend land and resource management plans for the Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests.

**SUMMARY:** The Forest Supervisors of the Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai and Lolo National Forests give notice of the agency's intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) in conjunction with the establishment of new management direction for the grizzly bear within the Selkirk and Cabinet/Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones. The Forest Service has identified the need to update management direction, based on new information regarding grizzly bear biology.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be postmarked by June 11, 2001. The agency expects to file a draft EIS with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and make it available for public, agency, and tribal government comment in the summer of 2001. A final EIS is expected to be filed in February 2002.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to Bob Castaneda, Forest Supervisor, Kootenai National Forest, 1101 US Hwy 2 West, Libby, MT 59923.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Rob Carlin, Grizzly Bear Plan Amendment Interdisciplinary Team Leader (406) 882-4451.

*Responsible Officials:* Pat Aguilar, Idaho Panhandle National Forests—Acting Forest Supervisor; Bob Castaneda, Kootenai National Forests—Forest Supervisor; and Deborah Austin, Lolo National Forest—Forest Supervisor.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** In 1998, the Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak grizzly Bear Subcommittee recommended new access management direction to aid in the recovery of the threatened grizzly bear within the Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones. This direction was titled the "Interim Access Management Strategy". Additional information was provided in an "Interim Access Management Rule Set." This new direction is based on new information regarding grizzly bear habitat needs, including the need for core security areas. The purpose of the amendment is to update Forest Plan management direction to respond to the recommendations and new information presented by the Selkirk/Cabinet Yaak Grizzly Bear Subcommittee.

### Proposed Action

The Forest Supervisors are proposing to amend their respective Forest Plans regarding Forest Plan standards and monitoring requirements that respond to the recommendations of the Interim Access Management Strategy and Interim Access Management Rule Set. The decision to be made is whether to adopt the proposed action as designed, with different requirements, or not at all.

This amendment would result in a new appendix to the Idaho Panhandle and Lolo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans). It will be an addendum to the Kootenai National Forest, Forest Plan, Appendix 8.

The Interim Access Management Strategy and Interim Access Management Rule Set comprise a set of access related guidelines developed over the past few years by the Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC). The guidelines address the following access management parameters: (1) Habitat security, (2) core area, (3) trial use of access related to habitat quality/season, (4) motorized access route density, (5) monitoring, and

(6) coordination with state wildlife agencies. The Rule Set also clearly discloses definitions of terminology related to each specific parameter. The complete text of these two documents is available on the IGBC internet website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc/scy/main.htm>. Copies may also be requested by contacting Rob Carlin, ID Team Leader, at 406-882-4451.

### Preliminary Issues and Alternatives

Some preliminary issues have already been identified and are listed below. These issues apply only to National Forest System lands on the units listed previously in this notice.

The interim access management strategy and rule set may affect the ability to use roads and trails, the construction of roads and trails, and the closure and decommissioning of roads and trails. This potentially influences activities such as timber harvest, recreation use, administrative management activities, and other uses associated with Forest Service roads and trails.

The interim access management strategy and rule set did not recommend standards for total and open motorized route density. Therefore, some people are concerned that the strategy and rule set do not fully address the habitat needs of grizzly bears.

### Public Involvement

The first public participation efforts involving the Interim Access Management Strategy and Rule Set began in the spring and summer of 1997 with a series of seven workshops held throughout Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Nearly 300 individuals either sent letters or asked to be placed on the project mailing list. The key public concerns identified at the workshops were: (1) The need to consider habitat needs in relation to timing of road access restrictions; (2) the need to consider hunting regulations and law enforcement; and (3) the need to consider access options to provide the public a reasonable level of access to the National Forests.

The Forest Supervisors are giving notice that the Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests are beginning an environmental analysis and decision-making process for this proposed action so that interested or affected people can participate in the analysis and contribute to the final decision. The Forest Service is seeking comments from individuals, organizations, tribal governments, and Federal, State, and local agencies that are interested or may be affected by the proposed action. The public is invited