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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Modoc National Forest; Damon Fire Salvage Sales

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement to disclose the environmental effects of the proposed salvage of fire killed or damaged timber on the Doublehead, Devil's Garden, and Big Valley Ranger Districts of the Modoc National Forest. The proposed activity will treat acres burnt in the Damon/Long Fire in late August of 1996. The fire burned approximately 23,000 acres. The proposal includes salvage of fire killed or damaged timber on approximately 9,500 acres; all yarding will be ground based with approximately 12 miles of temporary road that will be constructed and then closed after use; place all-weather surface gravel on Roads 44N77 and 43N08; reforest timber sites understocked by the fire on approximately 6,000 acres; remove approximately 8 miles of destroyed rangeland fence; revegetate non-timber sites suitable cover/forage species on approximately 2,000 acres; install 7 watering sites for wildlife; increase snag longevity by removing the tops on 50% of retained snags in order to offset projected snag deficiencies in fire replaced stands; redistribute top soil and deep till in old windrowed plantations; and treat slash adjacent to Highway 139.

Possible Alternatives to this proposal are No Action and Salvage Outside the Released Roadless Area Only. Preliminary issues identified with this project are impacts on big game habitat, impacts on soil productivity, and visual impacts.

The project is located in T42N,R5E&R6E, T43N,R5E,R6E,&R7E, Mount Diablo Meridian.

The purpose of the proposal is to meet the intent of the Modoc National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The management emphasis for this area is growth and yield of timber and big game habitat.

DATES: Comments concerning the proposal should be received in writing by December 4, 1996 to receive timely consideration in the preparation of the draft EIS. The draft EIS will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency in February 1997. The final EIS and Record of Decision is expected to be issued in April 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments concerning this proposal to James Kaderabek, District Ranger, Devil's Garden Ranger District, 800 W. 12th Street, Alturas, Calif. 96101. Direct questions about the proposed action and environmental impact statement to Paul Bailey, District Timber Mgt. Officer, Devil's Garden Ranger District, 800 W. 12th St., Alturas, Calif. 96101, phone 916-233-5811.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: The Forest Service is the Lead Agency and the responsible official for decisions regarding this analysis is Diane K. Henderson-Bramlette, Modoc National Forest Supervisor. She will select the preferred alternative based upon the analysis. Her address is 800 W. 12th St., Alturas, Calif. 96101.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposal includes harvesting only those trees that are dead or expected to die as a result of the Damon/Long Fire since most of the burned area is classified as marginal or low timber site. Only 9,500 of the 23,000 acres burned are deemed economical to harvest. The topography of the project area is flat with scattered lava reefs. There are no streams in the area, the only permanent water is two small ponds. The project area is not within an identifiable watershed, all water percolates through the soil.

A portion of the project area is within the Released Damon Butte Roadless Area, #05149. Approximately 9,900 acres of this released roadless area burned in the Damon/Long Fire with about 2,750 acres considered suitable for timber harvest. The Released Damon Butte Roadless Area is composed of mostly Juniper/Shrub woodlands with scattered aggregations of ponderosa pine. The

main resource value assigned to this area is as a transitory and winter range for deer. The released roadless area is substantially roaded with around 17.5 miles of existing road located in the timbered areas. The portions of the burned area that contained timber have been harvested in the past.

The Damon/Long Fire burned across State Highway 139, the area adjacent to the highway will be managed as a view area and will receive total slash treatment.

The majority of the timbered areas within the fire burned with hot, crown fires resulting in almost total mortality. Most of these areas will require reforestation work to reestablish a forest stand.

Public participation will be especially important at several points during the analysis. The first point is during the scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7). The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. This input will be used in preparation of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The scoping process includes:

1. Identifying potential issues.
2. Identifying issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Eliminating insignificant issues or those which have been covered by a relevant previous environmental analysis.
4. Exploring additional alternatives.
5. Identifying potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects and connected actions).

The DEIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by February 1997. 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 and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978), and that environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft stage may be waived if not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement. *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). The reason for this is to ensure 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.

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 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.

Dated: October 10, 1996.

Diane K. Henderson-Bramlette,
Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 96-26924 Filed 10-18-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

West Fork Potlatch EIS, Vegetation Management Analysis, Clearwater National Forest, Latch County, Idaho

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Clearwater National Forest, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose effects of alternative decisions it may make to manage vegetation, restore watersheds, and analyze access management in the vicinity of the West Fork of Potlatch Creek. The area is located approximately 2 miles north of the town of Bovill, Idaho. The purpose of the project is to implement the Clearwater Forest Plan within the context of ecosystem management principles; improve forest stand composition and health by reducing crown competition; reestablish western white pine as a major component in the ecosystem; and provide timber from

suitable lands in response to human needs for wood products.

This project will tier to the *Clearwater National Forest Environmental Impact Statement Land and Resource Management Plan* and *Forest Plan* (1987), which provides overall guidance of land management activities on the Clearwater National Forest. Analysis will also be conducted in compliance with the Stipulations of Dismissal agreed to in the settlement of the lawsuit between the Forest Service and the Sierra Club, et al. (Signed September 13, 1993).

The agency invites written comments and suggestions on the issues and management opportunities for the area being analyzed.

DATE: Written comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received on or before December 5, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Carmine Lockwood, District Ranger, Palouse Ranger District, 1700 Highway 6, Potlatch, Idaho 83855.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Suzanne Lay, Team Leader, at the same address, (208) 875-1131.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed action is designed to restore terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem health and to provide benefits to people within the capabilities of ecosystems. Vegetation treatments designed to reintroduce western white pine in the forest cover type will be analyzed. Regeneration and intermediate harvest treatments intended to improve the structure composition and function of the forest matrix will be analyzed, along with the use of prescribed fire and mechanical methods to treat fuel loadings. Intermediate treatments will be designed to improve forest health conditions by treating overstocked stressed sites while maintaining desirable serial species such as western white pine, ponderosa pine and western larch. These overstocked stands are highly susceptible to root rot pathogens, bark beetles, defoliators, and dwarf mistletoe. Restoration of the aquatic component will focus on eliminating sediment delivery sources to aquatic and riparian habitats, restoring stream channels, as well as improving the structural components in riparian areas by installing large woody debris where it is lacking. Other fish habitat improvement projects are also included in this analysis. This project area is in intermingled ownership. Much of the National Forest System land in the project area was acquired from Weyerhaeuser timber company in the 1930's after it had been logged.

The Clearwater National Forest Plan provides guidance to management activities within the potentially affected area through its goals, objectives, standards and guidelines, and management direction. The areas of proposed timber harvest and reforestation would occur only on suitable timber land, Management Areas E1, A4, A5 and M2. Below is a brief description of applicable management direction.

Management Area E1

Timber Management—Provide optimum sustained production of timber products in a cost effective manner while protecting soil and water quality (applies to approximately 15,900 acres on National Forest System land in the project area).

Management Area A4

Visual Travel Corridor—Maintain or enhance an aesthetically pleasing, natural appearing Forest setting surrounding designated roads, trails, and other areas considered important for recreational travel use (applies to approximately 2,900 acres of National Forest System land in the project area).

Management Area M2

Riparian Areas—Manage as areas of special consideration with distinctive values, and integrate with adjacent management areas to the extent that water and other riparian resources are protected (applies to approximately 2,500 acres of National Forest System land in the project area).

PACFISH—The *Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-Producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Portions of California* (PACFISH), an amendment to the Clearwater Forest Plan, provides additional guidance in anadromous drainages such as the Palouse River. This EIS will tier to the decisions and direction provided by the PACFISH EA and Decision Notice (2/95).

The West Fork Potlatch project area lies south of the divide between the Potlatch River drainage and the St. Maries River drainage. It is a roaded area with intermingled ownership in the panhandle of Idaho. The planning area consists of approximately 34,000 acres in located in T.41N., R.1W., T.41N., R.1E., and T.42N., R.1W., and T.42N., R.1E; Approximately 21,300 acres are on National Forest System land, and proposed actions are entirely on these lands. The decision to be made is what, if anything, should be done in the West Fork Potlatch project area to (1) maintain or enhance forest health and improve the structure and composition