

Arbitration and Good Cause: 3830 hours.

Dated: December 15, 1997.

Yvette S. Jackson,

Administrator, Food and Consumer Service.

[FR Doc. 97-33190 Filed 12-18-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-30-U

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Fatty-Piper Access Requests Project, Flathead National Forest, Swan Lake Ranger District, Lake County, Montana

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The Flathead National Forest, Swan Lake Ranger District, will prepare an environmental impact statement on a proposal to grant easements and authorize construction of roads across National Forest System lands in the Cedar Creek, Fatty Creek, and Piper Creek watersheds. The action is proposed in response to an applicant seeking permanent, roaded access to approximately 1,760 acres of non-federal land located within the Flathead National Forest boundary. The requested easements are located roughly 20 miles south of Swan Lake, Montana. The non-federal land to be accessed is located in sections 9, 15, and 23, Township 22 North, Range 18 West and section 35, Township 23 North, Range 18 West, Lake County, Montana. The easements are requested on National Forest System lands in sections 4, 10, and 14, Township 22 North, Range 18 West and section 34, Township 23 North, Range 18 West. The proposed project will be in compliance with the direction in the Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (December, 1985), which provides the overall guidance for management of the area. The agency gives written notice of this analysis so that interested and affected people are aware of how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing at the address shown below by January 23, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments to Charles E. Harris, District Ranger, Swan Lake Ranger District, 200 Ranger Station Road, Bigfork, Montana 59911.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about this environmental impact statement should be directed to Dennis McCarthy, Planning Team

Leader, Swan Lake Ranger District, 200 Ranger Station Road, Bigfork, Montana 59911; phone (406) 837-7500.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Swan Lake Ranger District is initiating this action in response to four applications filed by Plum Creek Timber Company, L.P. (Plum Creek). Plum Creek requested rights-of-way across Forest Service lands for the purpose of establishing permanent, roaded access to approximately 1,760 acres in four sections of Plum Creek land. The applications involve requests for five segments of road totaling approximately three miles across Forest Service land. Plum Creek has stated that it intends to manage these sections of land for long-term timber production using conventional ground-based logging systems and build roads on the permitted rights-of-way, sufficient to support timber production.

Plum Creek has no roaded access to two of the sections of land, which are surrounded by National Forest System lands. Plum Creek has limited access to the other two sections and has requested additional roaded access to them. Plum Creek seeks permanent, roaded access pursuant to federal regulations at 36 CFR part 251 (subpart D—Access to Non-Federal Lands), 36 CFR part 212 (Ingress and Egress) and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and its implementing regulations.

Swan Lake Ranger District personnel invited comments on the environmental analysis for this project in September, 1996, by sending a scoping notice to people on the District's mailing list. Subsequently, District personnel determined that they should prepare an environmental impact statement. The comments received in response to the September, 1996 scoping will be taken into consideration along with comments received on the draft environmental impact statement. Some of the issues identified include impacts to: Water quality; soils and slope stability; air quality; proximity to the Mission Mountains Wilderness; threatened, endangered, and sensitive animal, plant, and fish species and habitat (i.e., grizzly bear, bull trout, water howellia); old-growth forests; roadless area; and recreational experiences.

Swan Lake Ranger District personnel 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 actions. The scoping period for the draft environmental impact statement will extend to January 23, 1998. This

information will be used in preparation of the draft environmental impact statement.

The draft environmental impact statement will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency and will be made available for public review in February, 1998. At that time, copies of the draft environmental impact statement will be distributed to interested and affected agencies, organizations, and members of the public for their review and comment. The Environmental Protection Agency will publish a notice of availability of the draft environmental impact statement in the **Federal Register**. The comment period will be no less than 45 days from the date that appears in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice at this early stage 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 Corporation v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that 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 (8th Circuit, 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wisconsin, 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 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 on the proposed action, comments on the environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages of chapters 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.

The final environmental impact statement is scheduled to be completed by May, 1998. In the final environmental impact statement, the Swan Lake Ranger District is required to respond to comments and responses received during the comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the draft environmental impact statement and applicable laws, regulations and policies considered in making the decision regarding this proposal. Charles E. Harris, District Ranger, Swan Lake Ranger District, is the responsible official and his decision and reasons for this decision will be documented in the Record of Decision. The decision will be subject to Forest Service appeal regulations (36 CFR 215).

Dated: December 8, 1997.

Charles E. Harris,

District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 97-33062 Filed 12-18-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Notice of Intent To Request a Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) intention to request a revision to a currently approved information collection, the Rural Abandoned Mine Program.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by February 17, 1998 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Marcella Graham, Agency OMB Clearance Officer, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013-2890, (202) 720-5699.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Rural Abandoned Mine Program.

OMB Number: 0578-0019.

Expiration Date of Approval: May 31, 1998.

Type of Request: To reinstate, with change, a previously approved collection for which approval has expired.

Abstract: The primary objective of the Natural Resources Conservation Service is to work in partnership with the American people to conserve and sustain our natural resources. The Rural Abandoned Mine Program authorizes Federal technical and financial long-term cost-sharing assistance for conservation treatment and reclamation of abandoned coal mined land with eligible land users. The financial assistance is based on a conservation plan for reclamation which is made a part of an agreement or contract for a 5 or 10-year period of time. Under the terms of the agreement, the participant agrees to apply, or arrange to apply, the conservation treatment specified in the conservation plan. In return for this agreement, Federal cost-share payments are made to the land users, or third party, upon successful application of the conservation treatment.

Information collected is used by the NRCS to ensure proper utilization of program funds. The *NRCS-LTP-013* is used to record progress in applying the conservation/reclamation plan (7 CFR 632.24), such as the verification, revision or modification of the conservation plan, as well as recording the need for any follow up technical assistance. The *NRCS-LTP-150* is for the land user to enter into a contract with NRCS to receive Federal cost-share assistance (7 CFR 632.22). The *NRCS-LTP-151* is used to notify the participant, with an active agreement or contract, that information has been received which indicates a violation of the contract (7 CFR 632.42 (b)(1)(2)). The *NRCS-LTP-152* is used during the contract period when the land user loses control of all or part of the right and interest in the land (7 CFR 632.22(f)). The *NRCS-LTP-153* is used when non-compliance of the contract is indicated (7 CFR 632.41). The *NRCS-LTP-156* is the basic document used by landowners to request assistance through the local NRCS field office (7 CFR 632.20). The *NRCS-FNM-140* is used to authorize the vendor to furnish the conservation materials and services described in column (b) of the form (7 CFR 632.31(e)). This information collection is being resubmitted to reflect the elimination of two forms previously authorized (*NRCS-LTP-154* and *NRCS-LTP-155*) and to reflect a scaled-down program. NRCS will ask for 3-year OMB approval within 60 days of submitting the request.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.50 hours per response.

Respondents: Farms, individuals or households, or State, local, or Tribal governments.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 438.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 223 hours.

Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained without charge from Marcella Graham, the Agency OMB Clearance Officer, at (202) 720-5699.

Comments: Comments are invited on:

(a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of 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, such as through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technologic collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Marcella Graham, Agency OMB Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013-2890.

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.

Signed at Washington, D.C. on December 15, 1997.

Thomas A. Weber,

Acting Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

[FR Doc. 97-33126 Filed 12-18-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3610-16-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Municipal Interest Rates for the First Quarter of 1998

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of municipal interest rates on advances from insured electric loans for the first quarter of 1998.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service hereby announces the interest rates for