

resource conditions. Under this alternative no modifications would be made to the Special Use Permit to the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NMT) nor would there be construction to operate a new observatory and its associated facilities.

Full Build Out Alternative.—This would involve all sixteen telescopes at one time instead of seven. This would be similar to the proposed, with the exception of the number of telescopes being installed at one time.

Optical Laser Techniques Alternative.—This alternative would involve the use of adaptive optical techniques utilizing laser guide stars. A laser system of about 100 watts of power would be included with the scientific facilities identified in the proposed action.

24/24 Alternative.—This would involve adding two additional movable telescopes with mirrors of approximately 2.4 meters, linked to the interferometer array located south of the proposed single telescope site.

Lead and Cooperating Agencies

the USDA Forest Service, Cibola National Forest will be the lead agency for this proposed project. The U.S. Navy, Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) is a cooperating agency. New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NMT) is also a cooperating agency and part of a consortium of universities cooperating on this project.

Responsible Official

Cibola National Forest Supervisor, 2113 Osuna Road NE., Suite A, Albuquerque, NM 87113-1001.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The USDA Forest Service must decide whether or not to amend the existing Special Use Permit that currently allows NMT to operate the Langmuir Laboratory for Atmospheric Research, to include the proposed observatory and its associated facilities.

Scoping Process

A Public Involvement and Communication Plan (PIC) will be developed. It will focus on methods to inform the public on the proposal and to solicit public comments to help identify issues, concerns and opportunities associated with the Proposed Action. A prescoping letter will be sent out the week of October 1, 2002, with a two week response period to assist the forest in focusing on those audiences who are interested in the proposed activity. Once responses have been returned from the pre-scoping letter, the PIC plan will be

implemented. No specific meeting dates and locations have been identified at this time. The number, location and type of public involvement meetings to be held will be identified after comments have been returned from the pre-scoping letter.

Preliminary Issues

- Potential effects on Threatened and Endangered Species and habitat.
- Potential effects on visual quality from off-site locations on viewscape, including from adjacent ridges that may be used and/or have special value for Native American tribes.
- Potential effects of increased traffic on Water Canyon Road, and impact on private property inholdings and easements.
- Potential effects on recreation (such as cross country skiing and hunting) from new facilities and fenced areas.
- Potential effects on the Forest's ability to reduce fire risks within the Forest boundary and prevent catastrophic wildfire from increased human activity.
- Potential effects of developing and using a new water supply in an area where water for grazing operations is already stressed.
- Potential effects of slight reduction in area available for grazing, recreation, and other multiple uses that USFS determines to be incompatible with the primary use of the site for scientific purposes.

Permits or Licenses Required

Solid Waste, Air Quality, and Water Use.

Comment Requested

This Notice of Intent initiates the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review: A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. 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 (1987). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised 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 (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 November 29, 2002, 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 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, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21.

Dated: September 27, 2002.

Liz Agpaoa,

Cibola Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Klamath National Forest, California, Noxious and Invasive Plant Control Project EIS

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on a proposal to conduct noxious and invasive plant control on the Klamath National Forest (KNF) in Siskiyou County, California. The purpose of the proposal is to help in the control of noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants. These plants are an increasing threat to the function, composition, and structure of native ecosystems. This EIS will analyze the treatment of prioritized noxious weeds spread geographically over 27,000 acres on known and suspected infestation sites Forest-wide by a variety of treatment methods. Actual treatment would be on 2,700 acres per year or less. The KNF still has an opportunity to prevent extensive weed infestation and spread, if aggressive, consistent treatment is employed.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by 45 days after publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. The draft environmental impact statement is expected in summer 2003 and the final environmental impact statement is expected in fall 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Margaret J. Boland, Forest Supervisor, KNF, 1312 Fairlane Road, Yreka, CA 96097. Electronic mail may be sent to r5_klamath_comment@fs.fed.us. Please reference the Noxious and Invasive Plant Control Project on the subject line. Also, include your name and mailing address with your comments so documents pertaining to this project may be mailed to you.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Anne Yost, EIS Team Leader, (530) 468-1226.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

Noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants are a serious biodiversity issue of great significance to human and natural resource conditions on the KNF. Increasing human population and activity contributes to the rapid spread of weeds. There are about 2,000 exotic and noxious weed species already established in the United States, with more entering the country every year as trade and travel between continents increases. Millions of acres of public lands in the West are rapidly undergoing the greatest degradation due to the spread of invasive non-native plants. Estimates indicate invasive plants are increasing at about 4,600 acres per day on Federal lands alone,

and spreading at a rate of 14% per year (Asher and Mullahey, Weed Science Society of America Congressional Briefing, 1997). Within the last 20 years in California, studies show that yellow starthistle alone has increased from 1 million acres to more than 20 million—about 22 percent of the State's land base (Joe DiTomasso, Department of Weed Science, University of California, Davis, personal communication). Current inventories indicate that weeds are spreading at an increasing rate on Forest Service lands within the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5 Strategy).

According to statistics compiled by the Integrated Pest Control Branch of the California Department of Food and Agriculture Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services (1998 Annual Report), 93 percent of the acres infested with A-rated noxious weeds in the State are located in the northeastern part of the State, including Siskiyou County. B- and C-rated pests occur in greater numbers and their density and frequency varies according to individual site locations. These species are generally widespread in the State of California and in Siskiyou County, and eradication is not an achievable goal on a broad scale. On the KNF, the numbers of exotic invasive plant species and areas infested are relatively small compared to other parts of the west. The KNF still has an opportunity to prevent extensive weed infestation and spread if aggressive, consistent treatment is employed.

Project Objective

The objectives of the KNF Noxious and Invasive Plant Control Project are to:

- Protect the ecosystem function and biodiversity of the KNF by preventing the continued spread of aggressive, non-native plant species.
- Prevent the spread of established non-native noxious and invasive plants into uninfested or lightly infested area. This is a strategy of containing the leading edge.
- Eradicate new invaders (non-native noxious and invasive plant species not previously reported in the area) before they become established.
- Eradicate or control known and potential non-native noxious and invasive plant infestations in the following areas that are considered infestation pathways (roads, trails, streams, intensively burned areas) for the establishment and movement of these plants on the KNF.

Proposed Action

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, KNF, proposes

to treat/control prioritized noxious weeds that are spread geographically over 27,000 acres on known and suspected infestation sites Forest-wide by a variety of treatment methods. Actual treatment would be on 2,700 acres per year or less. The word "control" refers to eradication (elimination) or reduction for some weed populations, and slowing the rate of spread for others. An Integrated Pest Management approach will be used, which employs a combination of control methods including: physical control (e.g. hand-pulling, digging, clipping, mowing, tilling, and burning); cultural control (e.g., seeding and cultivation); biological control (e.g., use of parasites and pathogens); and chemical control (e.g., use of herbicides). No aerial spraying of herbicides will occur.

Responsible Official

Margaret Boland, Forest Supervisor, KNF, 1312 Fairlane Road, Yreka, California 96097 is the Responsible Official.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The decision is what actions, if any, should be taken to control non-native noxious and invasive plants on the KNF; where treatments should be applied, what type of treatments should be used, and what resource protection measures and operating procedures will be applied.

Scoping Process

In April 2002, this project was included in the KNF's Spring 2002 Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), which was posted on the KNF's internet website and mailed to the SOPA mailing list. In October 2002, a scoping letter of the proposed project will be sent to potentially affected individuals and anyone who expresses an interest in this proposal. This notice will invite public comment. Comments received will be included in the documentation for the EIS. The public is encouraged to take part in the process and to with the Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. 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 administrative study.

While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 45 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the Draft EIS. Information will be used in preparation of the draft and final EIS.

The scoping will include identifying: potential issues, significant issues to be analyzed in depth, alternatives to the proposed action, and potential environmental effects of the proposed and alternatives.

Comment Requested

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process, which guides the development of the environmental impact statement.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review

A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. 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 EISs must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposed 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, 533, (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the Draft EIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the Final EIS 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 EIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the Draft EIS 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 EIS 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, including the names and addresses of these who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection. (**Authority:** 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 191.15, Section 21)

Dated: September 27, 2002.

Michael P. Lee,

Deputy Forest Supervisor, Klamath National Forest.

[FR Doc. 02-25112 Filed 10-2-02; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area (SRA) Advisory Council

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: An Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Advisory Council meeting will convene in Stayton, Oregon on Monday, October 21, 2002. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m., and will conclude at approximately 8:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the South Room of the Stayton Community Center located on 400 West Virginia Street in Stayton, Oregon.

The Opal Creek Wilderness and Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Act of 1996 (Opal Creek Act) (Pub. L. 104-208) directed the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is comprised of thirteen members representing state, county and city governments, and representatives of various organizations, which include mining industry, environmental organizations, inholders in Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area, economic development, Indian tribes, adjacent landowners and recreation interests. The council provides advice to the Secretary of Agriculture on preparation of a comprehensive Opal Creek Management Plan for the SRA, and consults on a periodic and regular basis on the management of the area. Tentative agenda items include information sharing on the following topics:

Implementation of the Opal Creek SRA Management Plan;

Discussion on transition of the Council membership in accordance with provisions of the Council Charter;

Discussion of future topics and a tentative schedule for the Council meetings;

A direct public comment period is tentatively scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. Time allotted for individual presentations will be limited to 3 minutes. Written comments are encouraged, particularly if the material cannot be presented within the time limits of the comment period. Written comments may be submitted prior to the October 21 meeting by sending them to Designated Federal Official Stephanie Phillips at the address given below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For more information regarding this meeting, contact Designated Federal Official Stephanie Phillips; Willamette National Forest, Detroit Ranger District, HC 73 Box 320, Mill City, OR 97360; (503) 854-3366.

Dated: September 27, 2002.

Y. Robert Iwamoto,

Acting Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 02-25111 Filed 10-2-02; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Oregon Coast Provincial Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Oregon Coast Province Advisory Committee will meet in Grand Ronde, OR, October 24, 2002. The theme of the meeting is Community Recovery Sustainability/Business Planning. The agenda includes: A panel discussion involving special use permittees/off highway vehicle users/outfitters/guides/Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management; Community sustainability; Socio analysis of the southern Willamette Valley; Public input; and Round Robin sharing.

DATES: The meeting will be held October 24, 2002, beginning at 9 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Spirit Mountain Casino, ¼ mile west of Valley Junction, Oregon, on Highway 18.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joni Quarnstrom, Public Affairs Specialist, Siuslaw National Forest, 541-750-7075, or write to Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor, P.O. Box 1148, Corvallis, OR 97339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meeting is open to the public. Council discussion is limited to Forest Service/BLM staff and Council Members. Lunch