

SW., Room 3532, South Bldg., Washington, DC 20250, (202) 720-0345.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of FSIS' functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of FSIS' estimate of the 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, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques, or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to both FSIS, at the addresses provided above, and the Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20253.

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.

#### Additional Public Notification

Public awareness of all segments of rulemaking and policy development is important. Consequently, in an effort to ensure that the public and in particular minorities, women, and persons with disabilities, are aware of this notice, FSIS will announce it on-line through the FSIS Web page located at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations/2009\\_Notices\\_Index/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations/2009_Notices_Index/index.asp).

FSIS also will make copies of this **Federal Register** publication available through the FSIS Constituent Update, which is used to provide information regarding FSIS policies, procedures, regulations, **Federal Register** notices, FSIS public meetings, and other types of information that could affect or would be of interest to our constituents and stakeholders. The Update is communicated via Listserv, a free e-mail subscription service consisting of industry, trade, and farm groups, consumer interest groups, allied health professionals, scientific professionals, and other individuals who have requested to be included. The Update also is available on the FSIS Web page. Through Listserv and the Web page, FSIS is able to provide information to a much broader, more diverse audience.

In addition, FSIS offers an e-mail subscription service which provides automatic and customized access to selected food safety news and information. This service is available at

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/news\\_and\\_events/email\\_subscription/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/news_and_events/email_subscription/).

Options range from recalls to export information to regulations, directives and notices. Customers can add or delete subscriptions themselves, and have the option to password protect their accounts.

Done at Washington, DC, on: February 13, 2009.

**Alfred V. Almanza,**

*Administrator.*

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**BILLING CODE 3410-DM-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Klamath National Forest, California, Two Bit Vegetation Management

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

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

**SUMMARY:** The Klamath National Forest will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to document and publicly disclose the environmental effects of implementing commercial thinning and prescribed burn treatments in the Two Bit project area to provide forest products, restore forest health, and reduce fuel hazard on Klamath National Forest System lands. The project area is north and west of Happy Camp, California. Thinning and understory prescribed burning is proposed on approximately 10,800 acres.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received within 30 days of the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. The draft environmental impact statement is expected in April 2010 and the final environmental impact statement is expected in July 2010.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to John Allen or Nick Larson, Project Team Leaders, P.O. Box 377, 63822 Highway 96, Happy Camp, CA 96039. You may also send electronic comments to the project e-mail inbox: [comments-pacificsouthwest-klamath-happy-camp@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificsouthwest-klamath-happy-camp@fs.fed.us), or via facsimile to (530) 493-1796.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, become part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the respondent with standing to participate

in subsequent administrative review or judicial review.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The project Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/klamath/projects/projects/two-bit> or contact John Allen (530-493-1741), Nick Larson (530-493-1724) or District Ranger Ken Harris (530-493-1712) at the Happy Camp Ranger District, 63822 Highway 96, Happy Camp, California 96039 if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding this proposal.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The Two Bit Vegetation Management Project area is approximately 67,600 acres in size and is located within the Indian Creek watershed, north and west of Happy Camp, California, near the Oregon border. Thinning and prescribed burning are proposed on approximately 10,800 acres within treatment units scattered throughout the larger project area. Commercial thinning treatments make up approximately 2,200 acres of the total area proposed for treatment and the remainder (about 8,600 acres) is proposed for prescribed burning. The majority of the treatment units proposed for commercial thinning are existing plantations that have not been commercially thinned in the past. Approximately 300 acres proposed for treatment are natural stands. The project is scheduled for implementation in 2010.

National Forest System lands within the Klamath National Forest are managed using guidance provided by the Klamath National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). This Forest Plan provides two types of management direction: Forest-wide direction and Management Area direction. Other plans and policies that provide management direction for this project include, but are not limited to, the National Fire Plan, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. For further information pertinent to the Forest Plan please visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/klamath/projects/forestmanagement/forestplan/index.shtml>.

##### Purpose and Need for Action

Historic conditions in the Two Bit project area consisted of a moderate to low intensity, frequent interval (5-15 year) fire regime. Historical large fire history as well as fire exclusion have played a substantial role in vegetation successional patterns throughout the area. The current fire regime is characterized as moderate intensity with an infrequent (greater than 25 years)

interval. Historic conditions within the project area as seen in 1944 aerial photos and documented in the 1997 Indian Creek Watershed Analysis, indicate that large fires were a common occurrence in the area; there was variation in the landscape with areas of continuous cover broken up by openings of various sizes in the canopy. The lower severity fires of the past maintained open understories and kept levels of woody debris low; although, this varied as it does today depending on weather, local topography and fuels conditions. More recent aerial photo interpretation indicates a more continuous cover of forest with less variation and fewer openings. This change has contributed to increased fuel hazard (and the potential for high severity wildland fire), decreased habitat quality for some species and increased susceptibility to extreme insect and disease impacts and loss of big trees.

The differences between existing conditions and desired conditions form the basis for the need for action. Action is needed in the Two Bit project area to:

- Reduce tree density and move stands toward more natural composition and Structure.
- Restore and enhance meadows on the landscape.
- Sustain moderate timber yields that are compatible with area goals.
- Maximize tree growth while minimizing insect and disease susceptibility.
- Promote development of late-successional old-growth in Late-Successional Reserves.
- Protect mid- and early-seral forest from loss due to wildfire.
- Reduce the risk of losing northern spotted owl habitat from wildfire.
- Maintain and improve watershed conditions.

The purpose of the project is to:

1. Provide a programmed flow of timber products—Actions proposed in the Two Bit project area are designed to do this by improving and maintaining good growth rates, minimizing insect and disease damage through stocking control, and maintaining plantations where they currently exist. Approximately 80% of the area proposed for thinning is within existing plantations that are within Forest Plan Management Areas available for scheduled timber harvest (General Forest, Partial Retention Visual Quality Objective, Managed Wildlife Habitat) with the remaining area in Riparian Reserves and/or Late-Successional Reserves.
2. Sustain diverse, resilient ecosystems, more in keeping with

historic conditions—Actions proposed in the Two Bit project area are designed to do this by reducing stand density, improving structural diversity within stands, maintaining natural meadows and wetlands or restoring meadows and wetlands where encroachment has occurred, maintaining hardwood diversity or restoring hardwood diversity where loss has occurred or recruitment is low, protecting mid- and early-seral forest from loss due to wildfire, and maintaining watershed health and the quality of the Indian Creek water source.

#### Proposed Action

The proposed action has been designed to meet the purpose of the Two Bit vegetation management project and satisfy the need for action primarily by using commercial thinning and prescribed burning.

Approximately 10,800 acres within the large Two Bit project area have been identified where treatments are necessary and feasible. Approximately 133 units have been identified for proposed commercial thinning. Of these, 31 are natural stands and 102 are existing plantations. These units comprise approximately 2,000 acres. An additional 200 acres are proposed for a more specialized treatment (pole harvest, sanitation thinning, hardwood release or meadow enhancement) as described in more detail below, for a total of approximately 2,200 acres of treatments. Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir are the dominant species proposed for removal during thinning.

Commercial thinning is proposed in stands that are accessible from the existing road system and are of the size, age, terrain, and structure suitable for logging. Thinning would be followed by various fuel treatments, most of which would be underburning; although may include mastication, tractor piling, chipping, handpiling, or jackpot burning (burning small concentrations of slash and debris). Underburning would also be implemented on approximately 8,600 acres outside of commercial thinning units.

The majority of the thinning units identified in this project are proposed to be harvested using ground based operations (mechanized harvest or conventional tractor skidding); a few of the units have the opportunity to be cable logged, and none of the areas identified are proposed for helicopter logging. Trees deemed hazardous to the operations would be removed along the haul route.

Approximately 32 short temporary roads (totalling approximately 3.6 miles) are proposed for construction as part of

this project to facilitate tractor and cable logging. All temporary roads constructed for this project would be closed and hydrologically restored to minimize erosion and sediment production upon completion of the project.

In addition to closing temporary roads at completion of the project, decommissioning an additional 4.3 miles of existing roads is also proposed. These roads were identified using the 2004 roads analysis process as requiring excessive maintenance, having little value to future management projects, and contributing to unfavorable watershed conditions.

While commercial thinning and underburning are the two primary tools proposed within the Two Bit project area to meet the purpose and need, several smaller areas are proposed for specialized treatments as described below.

- Pole harvest is proposed for approximately 86 acres along roadsides that are heavily stocked with small diameter (less than 10 inch) trees. These areas are proposed for thinning to meet fuels objectives and would be made available to the local community through personal use pole permits.

- Sanitation harvest is proposed for approximately 36 acres along a roadside that has dwarf mistletoe infestation. Thinning in these areas is proposed to remove trees with dwarf mistletoe to prevent the spread to nearby healthy stands.

- Meadow restoration is proposed for approximately 80 acres in order to maintain or enhance meadow conditions. Treatments would include chainsaw removal of small encroaching conifers, handpiling and burning, and limited use of prescribed fire.

- Hardwood release is proposed for approximately 18 acres in order to reduce conifer competition with medium- to large-sized oak trees.

#### Responsible Official

Patricia Grantham, Klamath National Forest Supervisor, USDA Forest Service, 1312 Fairlane Road, Yreka, California 96097, will prepare and sign the Record of Decision at the conclusion of the NEPA review.

#### Nature of Decision To Be Made

The Forest Service is the lead agency for the project. Based on the result of the NEPA analysis, the Forest Supervisor's Record of Decision regarding the Two Bit vegetation management project will recommend implementation of one of the following: (1) The proposed action and mitigation necessary to minimize or avoid adverse impacts; (2) An

alternative to the proposed action and mitigation necessary to minimize or avoid adverse impacts; or (3) The no-action alternative. The Record of Decision will also document the consistency of the proposed action or one of the alternatives with the Klamath National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1995, as amended).

### Scoping Process

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process, which guides the development of the environmental impact statement. To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible. A public open house will be held at the Happy Camp Grange Hall (64501 Second Avenue, Happy Camp, CA) on March 4, 2009 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Forest Service staff will be on hand to meet with you, answer questions, and discuss the project and process. Comments may be submitted at the meeting, by email, fax or letter within the 30-day scoping period.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such a way that they are useful to the agency's preparation of the environmental impact statement. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions. The submission of timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in subsequent administrative appeal or judicial review.

Dated: February 12, 2009.

**Patricia A. Grantham,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

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**BILLING CODE 3410-11-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Klamath National Forest, CA, Big Pony Project

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

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

**SUMMARY:** The Klamath National Forest (KNF) will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to document and publicly disclose the environmental effects of implementing a vegetation and fuels management project designed to reduce fire hazard to research plots and improve forest health.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received within 45 days from date of publication in the **Federal Register**. The draft EIS is expected in March, 2010 and the final EIS is expected in August, 2010.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to Jorge Enriquez, Goosenest Ranger District, 37805 Highway 97, Macdoel, CA 96058. Comments may also be sent via e-mail to *comments-pacificsouthwest-klamath-goosenest@fs.fed.us*, or via facsimile to (530) 398-398-5749. A public scoping meeting to discuss project details and identify any potential significant issues will be held on March 18th, 2009 at the Goosenest Ranger District, 37805 Highway 97, Macdoel, CA 96058.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the respondent with standing to appeal the subsequent decision.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jorge Enriquez, Goosenest Ranger District at (530) 398-5784 or *jenriquez@fs.fed.us*. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose for the proposed project is to reduce the potential fire impacts to permanent research plots, and within and adjacent to wildland urban interface (WUI) near Tennant, California. Intensive logging in the early 1900s and subsequent fire suppression have increased susceptibility to stand replacing insect, disease, and fire events. The Big Pony Project is designed to reduce forest susceptibility to stand replacing wildfire and increase stand resiliency to insect, disease and fire damage while promoting the development of large-pine dominated forests.

The proposed Big Pony Project is located within the Goosenest Ranger District southeast of Tennant, California. The legal locations are Sections 24 and 25 in T43NR1W; and Sections 2, 3, 9-11, 14-18, 19-22, 27-30, and 32 in T43NR1E, Mt. Diablo Meridian, Siskiyou County, California. The proposed project area encompasses approximately 6,673 acres between

4,800 to 6,100 feet elevation. The Big Pony Project is consistent with management direction provided in the Northwest Forest Plan, Land and Resource Management Plan for the KNF, National Fire Plan, and the Endangered Species Act.

The Pacific Southwest Research Station established long-term research plots in 2000 to study accelerating the development of late-successional forest components. Forests surrounding the research plots are overstocked with white fir and ladder fuels that create conditions conducive to stand replacing wildfire. There is a need to enhance protection from catastrophic wildfire to minimize risk to research plots, private property, and to avoid fire suppression difficulties within and adjacent to the WUI.

### Proposed Action

The proposed project area encompasses approximately 6,673 acres between 4,800 to 6,100 feet elevation. The proposed action is to perform thinning and fuels treatment on 3,180 acres. The Proposed Action consists of the five following treatments which will be applied based on existing tree species present, fuels conditions, forest health, and wildlife concerns. In all treatments, the retention of old-growth legacy components (large diameter trees, large snags, and downed logs) will be emphasized.

Roads needed for the project will be reassessed prior to and during activities to determine if maintenance is needed and may require light maintenance to meet project requirements, generally consisting of spot rocking, grading, and re-establishing drainage structures. There will be no new roads constructed or added to the Forest road system. Approximately 0.5 miles of temporary road will be constructed for project implementation and will be constructed to design standards that minimize ground disturbance and protect resources. This temporary road will be decommissioned following project completion.

#### 1. Fuel Management Zone (FMZ) Treatments

Three hundred foot wide fuels reduction treatments will be applied on 708 acres, in a linear fashion centered along 13 miles of roads. The FMZs are designed to reduce fire hazard, improve fire suppression effectiveness, and improve fire fighter safety in the event of a wildfire. The FMZs will improve fire fighting effectiveness and safety by providing potential anchor points for fire fighters during initial attack. Trees less than 10 inches in diameter at breast