Notices

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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

Agricultural Marketing Service

[TM–96–00–201]

Notice of Program Continuation

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice Inviting Applications for Fiscal Year 1997 Grant Funds Under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) was allocated $1,200,000 in the Federal budget for fiscal year 1997. Funds remain available for this program. States interested in obtaining funds under the program are invited to submit proposals. While only State Departments of Agriculture or other appropriate State Agencies are eligible to apply for funds, State Agencies are encouraged to involve industry organizations in the development of proposals and the conduct of projects.

DATES: Applications will be accepted through June 9, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Proposals may be sent to Dr. Larry V. Summers, FSMIP, Staff Officer, Transportation and Marketing Division, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 2949 South Building, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090–6456.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Larry V. Summers, (202) 720–2704.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: FSMIP is authorized under Section 204(b) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621 *et seq.*). The program is a matching fund program designed to assist State Departments of Agriculture or other appropriate State Agencies in conducting studies or developing innovative approaches related to the marketing of agricultural products. Other organizations interested in the development of proposals on the conduct of projects should contact their State Department of Agriculture's Marketing Division to discuss their proposal.

Mutually acceptable proposals are submitted by the State Agency and must be accompanied by a completed Standard Form (SF)–424 with SF–424A and SF–424B attached. FSMIP funds may not be used for advertising or, with limited exceptions, for the purchase of equipment or facilities. Guidelines may be obtained from your State Department of Agriculture or the above AMS contact.

States are encouraged to submit proposals aimed at:

(1) Identifying and evaluating new or expanded uses and markets, both domestic and foreign, for food and other agricultural products;

(2) Developing or assessing alternative approaches to cope with increased price volatility and related risks in a market-driven, global economy; and,

(3) Reengineering and experimenting with regard to a variety of public marketing service programs, including but not limited to market news and information, grades and standards, and inspection or certification programs, in order to facilitate efficient and fair trading within increasingly complex and concentrated marketing systems.

Proposals addressing other marketing objectives or issues also will receive consideration.

FSMIP is listed in the ''Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance'' under number 10.156 and subject agencies must adhere to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars discrimination in all Federally assisted programs.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1621–1627.

Dated: November 27, 1996.

Eileen S. Stommes,

Director, Transportation and Marketing Division.

[FR Doc. 96–30862 Filed 12–3–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

Forest Service

Forest Plan Amendment 21; Flathead National Forest, Flathead, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Missoula, and Powell Counties, State of Montana

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: Notice of Intent to prepare a Revised Supplement to the December 1985, Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The revised supplemental environmental impact statement proposes to amend LRMP goals, objectives and standards, as well as LRMP monitoring requirements, for timber and wildlife to ensure maintenance of viable populations of old-growth associated species for the period pending revision of the LRMP, which is anticipated by January 2001. The original Notice of Intent was published June 28, 1990, (55 FR 26475). A revised notice was published April 2, 1992, (57 FR 11283).

This notice revises the scope of the proposed amendment.

DATES: The draft supplement to the EIS is scheduled for public distribution in May of 1997 and the final supplement is scheduled for release in September 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the proposed action and EIS should be directed to Nancy Warren, Interdisciplinary team leader, or Rodd Richardson, Acting Forest Supervisor. Flathead National Forest, 1935 Third Avenue East, Kalispell, MT 59901. Phone: (406) 755–5401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On January 22, 1986, Northern Region, Regional Forester, James C. Overbay issued the Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and Record of Decision (ROD). The LRMP contains six types of decisions: (1) Forest-wide multiple use goals and objectives; (2) Forest-wide standards and guidelines; (3) establishment of management areas and managmenet area direction; (4) designation of land suitable for timber production; (5) non wilderness allocations and wilderness recommendations; and (6) monitoring and evaluation requirements. The LRMP does not authorize or approve any ground-disturbing activities.

In accordance with 36 CFR 219.19, the LRMP designates three vertebrate species as Management Indicator Species for those species groups most

likely to be affected by forest management activities. The tree dependent group indicator species is the marten; the old growth dependent group is represented by the pileated woodpecker; and the riparian tree dependent group indicator species is the barred owl. Other indicator species include the threatened or endangered species (grizzly bear, gray wolf, bald eagle and peregrine falcon); commonly hunted species (mule deer, elk, and whitetailed deer); and fish species (bull trout and cutthroat trout). The LRMP includes a forest-wide standard to ''maintain old-growth habitat and snags at elevations below 5,000 feet at a number and distribution that will achieve the desired potential populations of old growth and cavity-dependent species.''

In an August 31, 1988, decision on administrative appeals #1467 and #1513 of the Flathead National Forest LRMP, the Chief of the Forest Service directed that the Regional Forester ''document additional analysis of the habitat requirements, and the distribution of habitat, for pine marten, barred owls, and pileated woodpeckers. This evaluation should lead to the development of additional standards that will ensure that these species will remain well distributed throughout the forest.'' Pending completion of this assignment, the Chief directed the Regional Forester to ''implement an old growth retention standard requiring 10 percent of each 3rd order watershed to be left in old growth habitat in blocks large enough to provide habitat for management indicator species and spaced to allow interaction between individuals.''

The Flathead National Forest has taken several steps to implement the direction contained in this administrative appeal decision. These steps include: memoranda, issued in December 1988 and updated in March 1991, to Flathead National Forest District Rangers and other resource managers providing procedures for implementing the old growth retention standard and a June 1992 Supplemental Monitoring Report that was sent to members of the public on the Flathead National Forest's mailing list. The 1992 Supplemental Monitoring Report displays historical and existing old growth habitat conditions; provides definitions of old-growth habitat based on the best scientific data available at the time; documents additional analysis of the habitat requirements of pine marten, barred owl, and pileated woodpeckers; documents the distribution of these habitats; and provides lists of other wildlife species associated with old-growth habitat. In addition, the Flathead National Forest prepares NEPA documents on all project proposals that may affect old growth related species. These NEPA documents, which are typically subject to public review and comment, disclose the potential impacts of the proposed action on old growth habitat and old growth related species.

On June 28, 1990, the Forest Service published in the Federal Register a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement on a proposal to amend the Flathead National Forest LRMP to adopt standards for management of habitat for pileated woodpecker, marten, and barred owl (55 FR 26475). The Forest Service published a notice on April 2, 1992, to clarify that the proposal was to prepare a supplement to the1985 LRMP EIS (57 FR 11283).

The Forest Service issued a Draft Supplemental EIS for Proposed LRMP Amendment #16 in June 1992 (57 FR 29490). The DSEIS considers five alternatives, including one (Alternative 5) that continues the current implementation of the Chief's interim old-growth direction. The interdisciplinary team concluded that all action alternatives, including continuation of current management direction, would result in population sizes and distributions that are adequate to maintain a stable population trend over a 150-year period. The interdisciplinary team also concluded that both Alternative 3 (the most restrictive alternative) and Alternative 5 (continuation of existing LRMP plus the Chief's direction) would ''* * * maintain habitat and Management Indicator Species' populations that were well distributed across the forest. The risk of creating isolated subpopulations and fragmenting habitat areas under these two alternatives is low.''

The notice of availability of the draft supplemental EIS on proposed Amendment 16 was published in the Federal Register on July 2, 1992. The Forest Supervisor granted the request of some respondents for an extension of the comment period beyond the required 45 days. The extended comment period closed on October 15, 1992. The Flathead National Forest received 271 written comments and 11 documented telephone calls and office visits.

Public comments on the draft supplement included requests that the Forest Service expand the scope of the proposed action, that the Forest Service delay completion of the SEIS until LRMP revision, ad that the scope of the analysis be expanded to include several national forests. In response to these comments, the Forest issued on May 5, 1993, a letter to the public stating that it may blend the work on Amendment #16 into its efforts to prepare for Forest Plan revision. The letter stated that the Forest will continue to implement the Chief's interim direction pending completion of revision. The Forest Supervisor stated:

> In your letters concerning Amendment 16, many of you asked for more analysis of interrelationships and for a decision that is broader in scope. We are now deciding how best to proceed. Options range from writing a Final EIS without changing the scope of the decision, to instead blending our work on Amendment 16 into our efforts to prepare for the ten-year Forest Plan revision.
>
> In the meantime, we will continue to implement the Forest Plan. We will continue to apply the Chief's interim direction (maintain 10 percent of each third-order drainage as old growth habitat). We will try to incorporate your comments and ideas into the process for monitoring and evaluation of the Forest Plan. And we will use some information from the Draft EIS in our project planning.

The Forest Service is continuing its efforts to develop and adopt a coordinated ecosystem management strategy for national forests. On January 21, 1994, the Chief of the Forest Service and the Director of the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management initiated the Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project. The Project is expected to produce two major products: (1) a Basin-wide assessment of ecosystem processes and functions, species, social systems, and economic systems; and (2) environmental impact statements addressing, among other topics, wildlife habitat conservation, threatened and endangered species conservation, and biological diversity on lands administered by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management within the Interior Columbia River Basin. A Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the Upper Columbia River Basin (UCRB) was published in the Federal Register on December 7, 1994 (59 FR 63071). The geographic scope of the UCRB EIS includes national forest and public lands in Idaho, western Montana, and small portions of Nevada, Wyoming, and Utah. The Flathead National Forest is within the area addressed in the UCRB EIS. The selected alternative may result in amendment or revision of applicable national forest land management plans. The scientific assessment documents are expected to be released by January 1, 1997. The UCRB draft environmental impact

statement is expected to be released in the Fall of 1996. The UCRB final environmental impact statement is scheduled for release in the fall of 1997 (61 FR 47859). The scientific assessment documents and the UCRB EIS are anticipated to include information relevant to the management issues on the Flathead National Forest regarding old growth habitat and associated species.

The purpose of preparing a revised supplemental EIS for the Flathead National Forest LRMP is to amend LRMP goals, objectives and standards, as well as LRMP monitoring requirements, for timber and wildlife pending completion of the UCRB process and revision of the Flathead National Forest LRMP. To avoid confusion with the previous proposed action, the current proposal is labeled as Amendment 21.

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 Corp.* 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. *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 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.

Dated: November 18, 1996.

Rodd E. Richardson,

Acting Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 96–30815 Filed 12–3–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 2200–00–M

Comprehensive Management Plans for the Wild and Scenic Rivers on the Ozark National Forest

AGENCY: Forest service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of the availability of comprehensive management plans for Wild and Scenic Rivers.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service, USDA has prepared comprehensive management plans for the following designated Wild and Scenic Rivers located on the Ozark National Forest in Arkansas: Big Piney Creek, Buffalo, Hurricane Creek, Mulberry, North Sylamore Creek, and Richland Creek. These plans may be reviewed at the USDA Forest Service, Southern Regional Office, 1720 Peachtree Road, NW, Atlanta, Georgia and the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, 605 West Main, Russellville, Arkansas. Information may be obtained by contacting Richard Bowie, Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, 605 West Main, Box 1008, Russellville, AR 72811–1008, (501) 968–2354.

Dated: November 26, 1996.

R. Gary Pierson,

Acting Deputy Regional Forester for Natural Resources.

[FR Doc. 96–30841 Filed 12–3–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

Rural Telephone Bank, USDA

Staff Briefing for the Board of Directors

Time and Date: 2 p.m., Tuesday, December 10, 1996.

Place: Room 5066, South Building, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC.

Status: Open.

Matters to be Discussed: General discussion involving privatization planning; update on legislative issues affecting the Bank and RUS telecommunications loan programs; interest rates for Bank funds advanced during FY 1996; proposed changes to loan policies; and status of State Telecommunications Modernization Plans.

Action: Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors.

Time and Date: 9 a.m., Wednesday, December 11, 1996.

Place: Williamsburg Room, Jamie L. Whitten Building, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC.

Status: Open.

Matters to be Considered: The following matters have been placed on the agenda for the Board of Directors meeting:

1. Call to Order.
2. Report on election results.
3. Swearing in newly elected Board members.
4. Election of Board Officers: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer.
5. Action on Minutes of August 22, 1996, Board Meeting.
6. Report on loans approved fourth quarter of FY 1996.
7. Report on requests for waiver of prepayment premium.
8. Summary of financial activity for fourth quarter FY 1996.
9. Report of ad hoc committee on privatization of the Bank.
10. General discussion regarding proposed changes to loan policies.
11. Consideration of resolutions to replace lost stock certificates.
12. Establish date and location of next regular Board meeting.
13. Adjournment.

Contact Person for More Information: Barbara L. Eddy, Deputy Assistant Governor, Rural Telephone Bank, (202) 720–9554.

Dated: November 27, 1996.

Wally Beyer,

Governor, Rural Telephone Bank.

[FR Doc. 96–30863 Filed 12–3–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–15–M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. 960828234–6331–03]

RIN 0690–AA25

Guidelines for Empowerment Contracting

AGENCY: Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: On September 13, 1996, the Department of Commerce issued proposed Guidelines for Empowerment Contracting and requested public comments to be submitted on or before October 15, 1996, (61 FR 48463). On October 28, 1996, the Department reopened the comment period and extended the deadline for receiving comments to December 1, 1996, (61 FR 55616). Pursuant to public request, this notice serves to extend the deadline for receipt of comments through January 6, 1997.

The guidelines set forth proposed policies and procedures intended to promote economy and efficiency in Federal procurement by granting