DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Hex Trail Road Access, Wenatchee National Forest, Kittitas County, WA

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Cancellation of an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: On May 19, 1994, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Hex Trail Road Access on the Cle Elum Ranger District of the Wenatchee National Forest was published in the **Federal Register** (59 FR 26204). Forest Service has decided to cancel the environmental analysis process. There will be no EIS for the Hex Trail Road Access. The NOI is hereby rescinded.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Direct questions regarding this cancellation to Susan Carter, Environmental Coordinator, Wenatchee National Forest, 215 Melody Lane, Wenatchee, Washington 98801 or telephone 509–662–4335.

Dated: May 27, 1997.

Sonny J. O'Neal,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 97–14733 Filed 6–4–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Sasse/Bell Ridge Road Access, Wenatchee National Forest, Kittitas County, WA

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Cancellation of an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: On May 19, 1994, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Sasse/Bell Ridge Road Access on the Cle Elum Ranger District of the Wenatchee National Forest was published in the **Federal Register** (59 FR 26202). Forest Service has decided to cancel the environmental analysis process. There will be no EIS for the Sasse/Bell Ridge Road Access. The NOI is hereby rescinded.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Direct questions regarding this cancellation to Susan Carter, Environmental Coordinator, Wenatchee National Forest, 215 Melody Lane, Wenatchee, Washington 98801 or telephone 509–662–4335.

Dated: May 27, 1997.

Sonny J. O'Neal

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 97–14734 Filed 6–4–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Kalispell; Idaho Panhandle National Forests; Bonner County, Idaho and Pend Oreille County, WA

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The USDA, Forest Service, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental effects of salvage thinning, reforestation, site preparation and use of prescribed fire in an ecosystem management project in the Kalispell Creek drainage. The area is located west of Priest Lake in the northern Selkirk Mountains, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Priest Lake Ranger District, Bonner County, Idaho and Pend Oreille County, Washington. Part of the proposed activities are within the Hungry Mountain Roadless Area (01–156). The project area is within the Kalispell-Granite Grizzly Bear Management Unit.

The purposes of this project are to improve the health and vigor of stands, to salvage dead and dying timber, to rehabilitate 50- to 70-year-old plantations of off-site ponderosa pine and white pine which is not blister-rust resistant, to reintroduce the role of fire into dry-site ecosystems, and to contribute to meeting society's demand for wood products. The proposal's actions to harvest and reforest stands and utilize prescribed fire are being considered together because they represent either connected or cumulative actions as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.25).

This project-level EIS tiers to the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and Final EIS (September, 1987), which provides overall guidance of all land management activities on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, including timber and access management.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before July 21, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Kent Dunstan, District Ranger, Priest Lake Ranger District, HCR 5, Box 207, Priest River, ID 83856; or e-mail comments to cjcary/rl__ipnf@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Contact Bob Stutz, EIS Team Leader; telephone (208) 443–2512.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Ecosystem management activities are proposed on a total of approximately 5,050 acres within the Kalispell Creek drainage. Existing roads, 15.6 miles of temporary winter roads constructed from snow, and 11 helicopter landing sites would provide access for vegetative treatments. No new road construction would occur. The proposal includes 4,094 acres of salvage in plantations which are 50 to 70 years old, followed by planting on 3,803 acres within those plantations; prescribed burning on 206 acres of dry-site ecosystems; prescribed burning on 1,049 acres for fuel breaks and/or site preparation; thinning on 245 acres of immature, overly-dense stands; and reforestation on 505 acres which would not be harvested before planting.

The Kalispell drainage has experienced a series of significant natural and human-caused disturbances within the last 70 years. The major disturbances include a wildfire in 1926 and a subsequent reburn in 1939. Logging occurred from 1927 to 1932, including salvaging in a portion of the area burned by the 1926 fire. Following these events, approximately 9,000 acres of ponderosa pine and white pine were planted, as well as a scattering of Douglas-fir and spruce. The ponderosa pine seedlings were from a seed source not suited to this area, and the white pine seedlings were not rust-resistant stock, resulting in uncharacteristically high levels of insects and diseases. Current mortality is high, and ongoing mortality in the non rust-resistant white pine is estimated to be three percent per year.

The goal of this project is to restore the vegetation in the analysis area towards historic stocking levels and species compositions. This would create conditions that more closely resemble the historical stands that were adapted to the site, climate, and fire regimes in this ecosystem and that are sustainable over time.

The purpose and need for ecosystem management in this area is four-fold, as follows: (1) To salvage and rehabilitate high mortality stands that were planted with ''off-site'' ponderosa pine and non blister-rust-resistant white pine; (2) to reintroduce the role of fire in the ecosystem, where it has been disrupted through fire suppression, in a way that will emulate effects of mixed severity fire under a natural fire regime; (3) to provide tree species and stocking levels that existed historically; (4) to contribute to the short-term supply of

timber to help meet the national demand for wood products and to support the local economy.

The analysis area consists of approximately 24,400 acres of National Forest lands included in T35N., T36N. and T37N. in R.45E., T35N. and T36N., R.46E., Willamette Meridian, Washington; and T.60N., and T61.N. in R.4W., and T.60N and T.61N., R.5W., Boise Meridian, Idaho.

The decision to be made is how much, if any, timber harvest should occur; how many acres, if any, of reforestation and site preparation should be accomplished; how many acres, if any, prescribed burning should be performed; and the timing of such activities. The decision would also include the type and level of access, if any.

The Forest Plan provides guidance for management activities within the analysis area through goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, and management area directions. The proposed activities would take place in designated Management Areas (MAs) 1, 4, 9 and 16. Goals for each of these MAs include protecting soil productivity, meeting or exceeding state water quality standards, providing opportunities for dispersed recreation, and meeting visual quality objectives. Below is a brief description of other management direction for these areas.

Management Area 1: Manage for long-term growth and production of commercially valuable wood products and to provide wildlife habitat.

Management Area 4: Manage big game winter range to provide forage for wildlife needs through timber harvest and permanent forage areas.

Management Area 9: Manage lands to maintain and protect existing improvements and resource productive potential.

Management Area 16: Riparian area dependent resources will be featured, while producing other resource outputs at levels compatible with objectives for riparian resources.

The Forest Service will consider a range of alternatives, including the ''no action'' alternative in which none of the proposed activities would be implemented. Additional alternatives will examine varying levels and locations for the proposed activities as well as responding to issues and other resource values.

The EIS will analyze the direct, indirect and cumulative environmental effects of the alternatives. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable activities in the analysis area will be considered. Analysis of site-specific mitigation measures and their effectiveness will be disclosed.

Public participation is an important part of the analysis process, commencing with the initial scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7) which will begin with the publication of this notice. The public is encouraged to take part in the process and to visit with 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 action. This input will be used in preparation of the draft and final EIS. The scoping process will include:

- Identifying potential issues.
- Identifying major issues to be analyzed in depth.
- Identifying alternatives to the proposed action.
- Exploring additional alternatives which will be derived from issues recognized during scoping activities.
- Identifying potential environmental effects of this project and alternatives (i.e. direct, indirect and cumulative effects and connected actions).

The following issues have been identified: Grizzly bear security habitat, water and sediment yield and fisheries habitat, roadless area character, soils, and big game winter range. This list may be changed based on continuing public participation.

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by September, 1997. At that time EPA will publish a notice of availability in the **Federal Register.** The comment period on the Draft EIS will close 45 days from the date the notice of availability appears in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in the management of this area participate at that time. 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. The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed by December, 1997.

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).* 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 (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 scoping period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider and respond to them in the final EIS. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection.

To be most helpful, comments should be as specific as possible. 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 1503.0 in addressing these points.

I am the responsible official for this environmental impact statement.

Dated: May 28, 1997.

Kent Dunstan,

District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 97–14635 Filed 6–4–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

National Agricultural Statistics Service

Notice of Intent To Request an Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. No. 104–13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the National Agricultural Statistics Service's (NASS) intention to request an extension of a currently approved information collection, the Supplemental Qualifications Statement that expires September 30, 1997.