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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

Forest Service

Pinkham Timber Sales and Associated Activities; Kootenai National Forest, Lincoln County, Montana

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of 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 timber harvest, prescribed fire, road closures, road rehabilitation, and construction of temporary and specified roads in the Pinkham Creek drainage. The Pinkham Creek drainage is located approximately 5 air miles southwest of Eureka, Montana.

The proposed actions to harvest and reforest timber stands, construct, reconstruct and rehabilitate roads, prescribe burning, and restrict roads are being considered together because they represent either connected or cumulative actions as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.25). The purposes of the project are to restore ecological processes in order to achieve sustainable conditions, reduce the risk of large-scale, severe wildlife in an urban/wildland interface area, and provide for human needs and desires.

The EIS will tier to the Kootenai National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and Final EIS of September, 1987, which provides overall guidance for forest management of the area. All activities associated with the proposal will be designed to maintain high quality wildlife, fisheries, and watershed objectives.

DATES: Written comments and suggestions should be received by December 8, 1997.

ADDRESSES: The Responsible Official is Robert Schrenk, Forest Supervisor, Kootenai National Forest. Written comments and suggestions concerning the scope of the analysis may be sent to: Robert Thompson, District Ranger, Rexford Ranger District, 1299 Highway 93 North, Eureka, Montana 59917.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Terry Chute, Planning Coordinator, Rexford Ranger District, Phone: (406) 296–2536.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The decision area contains approximately 65,100 acres within the Kootenai National Forest in Lincoln County, Montana. All of the proposed projects would occur on National Forest lands in the Pinkham Creek drainage near Eureka, Montana. The legal location of the decision area is as follows: all or portions of Township 36 North, Range 28 West; Township 36 North, Range 27 West; Township 35 North, Range 28 West; Township 35 North, Range 27 West; Township 34 North, Range 28 West; Township 34 North, Range 27 West; Township 33 North, Range 28 West; Township 33 North, Range 27 West; Principal Montana Meridian.

All proposed activities are outside the boundaries of any inventoried roadless area or any areas considered for inclusion to the National Wilderness System as recommended by the Kootenai National Forest Plan or by any past or present legislative wilderness proposals.

The Forest Service proposes to commercially thin and prescribed burn about 5,050 acres; regeneration harvest and prescribe burn about 1,425 acres; salvage harvest about 290 acres; and slash and prescribe burn (with no associated harvest) about 1,750 acres over the next 10 years. An estimated harvest volume of approximately 59,530 hundred cubic feet of commercial timber products would be produced. An estimated 1.1 mile of specified road construction would be needed to access timber harvest areas. An estimated 38 miles of road reconstruction would also be needed to improve drainage and safety on roads needed to access timber harvest areas. An unspecified amount of road no longer in use would be rehabilitated by various methods which include recontouring, ripping and seeding, rehabilitated by various methods which include recontouring, ripping and seeding, rehabilitation of stream crossings, and installment of barriers resulting in abandonment.

Three management strategies have been developed in response to the following conditions:

1. Reduce the risk of catastrophic fire by treating areas of high or accumulating fuel concentrations. The treatments proposed under this strategy include commercial timber harvest, slashing and prescribed burning. Timber harvest would include salvage, commercial thinning and regeneration methods. Methods used would depend on the composition of stands proposed for treatment and available options for achieving desired conditions and trends.

2. Minimize the risk of epidemic bark beetle attack by developing desirable tree species composition and reducing stand density. This strategy is related to Strategy 1, as epidemic bark beetle activity causes tree mortality that can greatly increase fuel accumulations. The treatments proposed under this strategy include commercial thinning, slashing and prescribed burning.

3. Minimize the effect of high levels of root rot by regenerating areas of high root rot activity to less susceptible tree species. This strategy is related to Strategies 1 and 2 as root rot weakens and predisposes trees to bark beetle attack. The subsequent increase in tree mortality can greatly increase fuel accumulations. The treatment proposed with this strategy would use regeneration harvest methods to reestablish stands of tree species less susceptible to root rot. In the Decision Area, Douglas-fir is the tree species that is most susceptible to root rot. Western larch and western white pine are less susceptible, and are well suited to the portions of the Decision Area affected by root rot.

The Kootenai National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan provides overall management objectives in individual delineated management areas (MA's). The proposed projects encompass five predominant MA's; 6, 10, 11, 12 and 15. Briefly described, MA 6 is managed to provide for opportunities for developed recreation activities. MA 10 is managed to maintain or enhance the winter range habitat effectiveness for big game species. MA 11 is managed to maintain or enhance the winter range habitat effectiveness for big game species and produce a programmed yield of timber. MA 12 is managed to maintain or

enhance non-winter big game habitat and produce a programmed yield of timber. MA 15 focuses upon timber production using various silvicultural practices while providing for other resource values such as soils, air, water, wildlife, recreation, and forage for domestic livestock. Timber harvest and prescribed burning is proposed in all MA's. This proposal includes replicating historic disturbance patterns. Fourteen forest openings greater than 40 acres in size would be created, ranging in size from 44 to 373 acres. A 60 day public review and approval of the Regional Forester for exceeding the 40 acre limitation for regeneration harvest would be required prior to the signing of the Record of Decision. The 60-day scoping period initiated with this Notice of Intent will serve as the public review period for openings over 40 acres.

The Proposed Action would include two amendments to the Kootenai Forest Plan. A programmatic amendment to the Forest Plan for managing open road density at a level above the MA 12 standard may be necessary. A project-specific amendment for harvesting in big game movement corridors in MA 12 may also be necessary.

The Forest Service will consider a range of alternatives. One of these will be 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 to achieve the proposal's purposes, as well as to respond to the issues and other resource values.

Concerns: Several areas of concern were identified by the public as well as Forest Service personnel during preliminary assessment. These concerns are briefly described below:

- The Pinkham area is home to many people who care deeply about, and have multi-generational ties to the area. Public land in the valley is seen as an asset for recreation and people's quality of life.
- Clear-cutting: Many people said there has been too much clear-cutting in the area in the past, and they are ugly. Future harvest should be done selectively, leaving the large trees. On the other hand, some said that clear-cuts provide important habitat for deer, elk and grouse, and that clear-cutting should continue.
- Prescribed burning: People do not like the appearance. Many believe that trees that are burned up or killed could have provided firewood or wood products. A few said they understood the need for burning in some cases, but had reservations. Smoke in the valley from prescribed burning was also mentioned.
- Roads and road access: Comments varied. Many thought there were too many road closures, while others felt that more roads should be closed. Many people felt that there were enough or too many roads in the area, and that no new roads were needed. Several people identified the need to increase control of knapweed, which occurs along some roads in the area.
- Public use and recreation: There is a common sentiment that public recreational use has increased over the past several years. Hunting and snowmobiling were specifically mentioned as uses that have increased. Many people said that additional developed recreation sites were not desired or needed. Some desire increased maintenance of trails, especially historic pack trails. Others mentioned the decreasing availability of firewood. Off-road vehicle use was said to be increasing, which was not desired due to noise and ground disturbance. A majority of people said that maintaining traditional recreational opportunities was important.
- Wildlife: A variety of opinions and observations about wildlife were expressed. Some felt that populations of deer, elk and moose were increasing, while others said they were declining. Some said that management of the area should focus on recovery of threatened, endangered and sensitive wildlife species, while others believe that ''multiple-use'' management should continue. One mentioned that designated winter range is used almost totally in summer and fall months.
- Livestock grazing: Many comments were received expressing displeasure and frustration with livestock grazing in the area. Open-range cattle on private land, in streams, and in roadways were mentioned numerous times. Other comments expressed the desire to maintain or increase livestock grazing in the area.
- Timber management: Many people said that timber harvest is appropriate, and expressed a preference for selective harvests that retain both large and small trees, are adequately cleaned up following harvest, and provide opportunities for small operators. The appearance of recently logged areas is important to many people. Several stated that dead and dying trees should be harvested before they lose their value for timber products. Some people expressed their belief that the area has been over cut in the past and further timber harvest is inappropriate. Others said that timber should be managed as it has been in the past, and that the emphasis for the area should be for maximum timber production.
- Water quality, riparian areas: The need for water quality protection was mentioned by several people. Some thought the area near Pinkham Creek should not be harvested, but should be maintained for fishing and camping. One person mentioned that the Forest Service needed to pay more attention to wet areas within harvest units. Concern about effects to water quality from cattle in streams was voiced.
- What people would like the Pinkham Area to be like in the future: Many people expressed a desire that the area continue to provide the quality of experiences and benefits to people that it has over the past 90+ years. Many people mentioned maintaining the lower valley floor as a quality residential area, while providing opportunities for recreation, grazing and timber harvest. A common sentiment seemed to be that the area remain ''unchanged''—as remote as possible, a good place to raise a family and make a living. Others believe that the area should be managed for reforestation, wildlife habitat improvement, sensitive and endangered species recovery, water quality and fishery improvement. Still others feel that recreation should be the primary human use.
- Public involvement and scoping: In October, 1993 a ''Pinkham Project Area Planning Report'' was mailed to over 200 local landowners and residents, and people that had expressed interest in Forest Service activities in the area. Advertisements were also placed in the *Daily Interlake*, Kalispell, Montana and the *Tobacco Valley News*, Eureka, Montana, requesting public comment and information concerning the Pinkham Project Area. In addition, in June, 1997 a letter was mailed to approximately 230 individuals, groups and other agencies comprising the mailing list for the Pinkham Project Area requesting written comments. Taking into account the comments received and information gathered during preliminary analysis, it was decided to prepare an EIS for the Pinkham Timber Sales and Associated Activities. Comments received prior to this notice will be included in developing issues and identifying alternatives for the EIS.

This environmental analysis and decision making process will enable additional interested and affected people to participate and contribute to the final decision. The public is encouraged to take part in the process and is encouraged 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, 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 preliminary issues.
—Identifying significant issues to be analyzed in depth.
—Identifying alternatives to the proposed action.
—Identifying potential environmental effects of this project and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects and connected actions).

Estimated Dates for Filing: While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 60 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the Draft EIS. The 60-day comment period will fulfill the public review requirement for creating openings over 40 acres in size. The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by March, 1998. At that time, EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the Draft EIS will be a minimum of 45 days from the date the EPA publishes the Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed by June, 1998. In the Final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to comments and responses received during the comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the Draft EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making a decision regarding the proposal.

Reviewers Obligations: 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.* versus *NRDC,* 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon* versus *Hodel,* 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc.* versus *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 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 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 discussed. 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.

Responsible Official: Robert Schrenk, Forest Supervisor, Kootenai National Forest, is the Responsible Official. Authority for preparation of the EIS has been delegated to Robert Thompson, District Ranger, Rexford Ranger District, 1299 Highway 93 North, Eureka, Montana. The Responsible Official will decide which, if any, of the proposed projects will be implemented. The decision and reasons for the decision will be documented in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations.

Dated: October 2, 1997.

Robert J. Thompson,

Acting Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 97–26624 Filed 10–7–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

BARRY GOLDWATER SCHOLARSHIP AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request; Extension

AGENCY: Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*), this notice annouces that the Goldwater Scholarship Foundation is planning to submit, for extension, the following Information Collection Request (ICR) to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB): Goldwater Scholarship Payment Request Form, OMB No. 3019–0001. Before submitting the ICR to OMB for review and approval for extension, The Goldwater Foundation is soliciting comments on the proposed ICR as described below.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before December 8, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Mail comments to Gerald J. Smith, President, Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, 6225 Brandon Avenue, Suite 315, Springfield, VA 22150–2519.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gerald J. Smith, (703) 756–6012; FAX: (703) 756–6015; E-mail: goldh2o@erols.com.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Affected Entities: Entities affected by this action include approximately 400 Goldwater Scholars and their respective Academic and Financial Aid Officers.

Title: Goldwater Foundation payment Request Form.

Abstract: Public Law 99–166 authorizes The Goldwater Foundation to conduct an annual nationwide undergraduate scholarship competition for students pursuing careers in mathematics, the natural sciences and engineering. This Information Collection Form is used by the Foundation to verify a Goldwater Scholarship recipient's academic standing and to authorize the disbursement of funds to the Scholar each term.

The Foundation uses this form to ensure that only authorized expenses are requested and to avoid the duplication of other scholarship funding which is prohibited. Less frequent collection of this information would not allow the Foundation to verify a Scholar's academic and financial status as required each term. Further, less frequent collection would cause the Foundation to expend funds sooner than would be fiscally responsible, since all funds are interest bearing until expended. Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (the PRA) (44 U.S.C. 3501–3520), Federal agencies must obtain approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for each collection of information they conduct or sponsor. ''Collection of information'' is defined in 44 U.S.C. 3502(3) and 5 CFR 1320.3© and includes agency requests or requirements that members of the public submit reports, keep records, or provide information to a third party.