hydrologic function, soil productivity, and fisheries and wildlife habitat. This in turn would: (a) improve the hydrologic function and productivity on soils committed to roads that may no longer be needed for future management, (b) reduce current and potential sediment delivery to streams from roads, especially within Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs), (c) reduce overall road densities, especially in landslide prone areas and riparian habitat conservation areas to improve geomorphic integrity and water quality integrity, (d) reduce or improve stream crossings to decrease the ''hydrologic connectivity'' between roads and streams, (e) improve fish passage at road crossings, (f) avoid management activities that have the potential to increase stream temperatures in Wildhorse River; a downstream 303(d) listed Waterbody, (g) avoid additional cumulative impacts to the Snake River; a downstream 303(d) listed Waterbody, and (h) manage open road densities to maintain the Forest Plan Elk Habitat Effectiveness (EHE) rating in Issue Reporting Area (IRA) 117 to Forest Plan Standards. Within IRA 118, manage open road densities to Forest Plan Standards that occur within the Lick Project Area (approximately ⅓ of IRA 118 overlaps the project area).

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would reduce fuels, manage forest vegetation, enhance NIDGS habitat, and manage roads. (1) Reduce Fuels—Use mechanical thinning and harvesting, and prescribed fire treatments on approximately 1,200 acres. (2) Manage Forest Vegetation—(a) Use ground-based, skyline, and helicopter yarding systems to harvest timber on approximately 1,438 acres. The harvest prescriptions would encompass 163 acres of reserve tree (retain 3–10 healthy seral trees per acre), 51 acres of shelterwood seed-cut (retain 10–15 healthy seral trees per acre), 999 acres of commercial thin/sanitation salvage, and an additional 233 acres of precommercial thin. Reforestation treatments would include 260 acres, of which approximately 171 acres would require plantation fencing. (b) Reduce generated fuels and/or prepare sites for planting by underburning or piling and burning of logging slash. (3) Enhance Northern Idaho Ground Squirrel Habitat—(a) Use mechanical thinning and prescribed fire on about 225 acres to restore suitable NIDGS habitat to historical conditions. Within the Lick Creek corridor, shade-tolerant conifer tree species (grand fir and to some extent Douglas-fir) would be thinned, while retaining the large, old ponderosa pine or Douglas-fir. (b) Reintroduce fire following thinning to rejuvenate the herbaceous vegetation. (c) Install temporary fencing around the area to exclude cattle and hasten recovery. (4) Manage Roads—(a) Construct 4.0 miles of new roads (close following project implementation), and decommission 26.6 miles of existing roads (8.9 miles of classified roads and 17.7 miles of non-classified roads). (b) Close year-round approximately 12.9 miles of road that are currently open year-round and/or seasonally.

Responsible Official

The responsible official is the Forest Supervisor of the Payette National Forest.

Scoping Process

Public notices have been placed in local and regional newspapers. A public meeting is anticipated to occur following issuance of the draft EIS. The meeting will be announced in the Payette National Forest's newspaper of record, the Idaho Statesman, Boise, Idaho.

Preliminary Issues

The proposed action may generate six preliminary issues. [We pay for Federal Register notices, and long ones get expensive. We rarely get comments about issue background statements appearing in Federal Register notices. I would abbreviate and save govt. money as follows.] (1) Effects on Water Quality. (2) Effects on Fisheries (3) Effects on Wildlife Habitat. (4) Effects on Noxious Weeds. (5) Effects on Recreation. (6) Effects of Road Construction and Decommissioning.

Design features for the Proposed Action will help reduce or eliminate other possible impacts (visual resource, heritage resources, water quality, soils, fisheries, wildlife, etc.).

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in 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, 533 (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 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 raised by 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: July 3, 2002.

Mark J. Madrid,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 02–17302 Filed 7–9–02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Notice of Resource Advisory Committee Meeting

AGENCY: Southwest Idaho Resource Advisory Committee, Cascade, ID Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92–463) and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106–393) the Boise and Payette National Forests' Southwest Idaho Resource Advisory Committee will meet Thursday, July 25, 2002 in Cascade,

Idaho for a business meeting. The meeting is open to the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Randy Swick, McCall District Ranger and Designated Federal Officer, at (208) 634–0400.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The business meeting on July 25th, begins at 10:30 a.m., at the American Legion Hall, Cascade, Idaho. Agenda topics will include review and approval of project proposals, and an open public forum.

Dated: July 1, 2002.

Mark J. Madrid,

Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest.

[FR Doc. 02–17220 Filed 7–9–02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Notice of Resource Advisory Committee Meeting

AGENCY: North Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee, Grangeville, Idaho, Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Public Law 92–463) and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106–393) the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests' North Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee will meet Thursday, July 25, 2002 (The date of June 25, 2002 for this meeting, published on July 2, 2002, was incorrect) in Elk City, Idaho for a business meeting. The meeting is open to the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ihor Mereszczak, Staff Officer and Designated Federal Officer, at (208) 983–1950.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The business meeting on July 25 begins at 2 p.m., at the Elk City Forest Service Ranger Station, Elk City, Idaho. Agenda topics will include review FY03 work plans. A public forum will begin at 3 p.m. (PST).

Dated: July 1, 2002.

Ihor Mereszczak,

Acting Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 02–17252 Filed 7–9–02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Southern Intertie Project; Notice of Availability of a Final Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability of a final environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has released for public review the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Southern Intertie Project. The project, being proposed by the Intertie Participants Group (IPG), is the construction of a 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line between the Kenai Peninsula and Anchorage, Alaska. The RUS is the lead Federal agency in the environmental review process. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are serving as cooperating agencies.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lawrence R. Wolfe, Senior Environmental Protection Specialist, Engineering and Environmental Staff, USDA Rural Utilities Service, Stop 1571, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250–1571, telephone (202) 720–1784, fax (202) 720–0820. The E-mail address is: *lwolfe@rus.usda.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The IPG has proposed a new 138 kV transmission line in order to improve the overall Railbelt electrical system reliability and energy transfer capabilities between the Kenai Peninsula and Anchorage. The IPG proposed alternative, the Enstar Route, would connect the Soldotna Substation on the Kenai Peninsula with the International Substation in Anchorage. This alternative would parallel the Enstar Pipeline through the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (KNWR). The environmentally preferred alternative, the Tesoro Route, would connect the Bernice Lake Substation on the Kenai Peninsula with the Pt. Woronzof Substation in Anchorage. This alternative would parallel the Tesoro Pipeline from the Captain Cook State Recreational Area to Pt. Possession. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) analyzed the potential impacts of constructing and operating a 138 kV transmission line along both the Enstar and Tesoro Routes. The DEIS also evaluated a number of routing alternatives and related system improvements between the proposed substation connections, in addition to alternative technologies and the no-action alternative.

Notices of availability of the DEIS were published in the **Federal Register** on October 3, 2001 (66 FR 50396) by RUS and on October 5, 2001 (66 FR 51036) by EPA. The 60-day comment period on the DEIS ended on December 5, 2001.

As required by Title XI of Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, public hearings were held on the DEIS in the District of Colombia on October 30, 2001, and within the State of Alaska, in Anchorage, on November 13, 2001, and in Soldotna, on November 14, 2001.

Public testimony at the three hearings was received from 12 persons. During the 60-day comment period, a total of 102 different comment letters were received from Federal, State, and municipal agencies, businesses, native corporations, non-profit organizations, and individuals. Two of the letters were e-mail form letters signed by 158 and 907 individuals, respectively, and one letter was in petition format with 12 signatures. The actual number of commentors was 1,174.

The FEIS incorporates information received on the DEIS and consists of two volumes. Volume I consists of an expanded Project Summary, responses to comments, including copies of the original correspondence, supplemental information, and corrections to the DEIS. The USFWS Compatibility Determination and the USACE Draft Evaluation of the Section 404(b)(1) Permit Application are appended to this volume. Volume II consists of the mitigation plan that was developed to either eliminate or minimize impacts associated with the construction and operation the proposed project utilizing either the Enstar or Tesoro Routes.

Copies of the FEIS have been sent to agencies, organizations, and individuals that received the DEIS. Additional copies of the FEIS are available for public review at the following public libraries in Anchorage: Z.J. Loussac Public Library; Chugiak-Eagle Public Library; Gerrish (Girdwood) Branch Library; Mountain View Branch Library; Muldoon Branch Library; and the Samson-Dimond Public Library. Copies will also be available for review at the following libraries on the Kenai Peninsula: Hope Community Library; Cooper Landing Community Library; Soldotna Public Library; and Kenai Community Library. In Washington, DC, copies are available for review at RUS offices. The FEIS is available online at *http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm.*