

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service**

Caribou-Targhee National Forest; Idaho; Caribou Travel Plan Revision—(Located in Bonneville, Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Bonneville, Caribou, Franklin, Oneida, Power Counties in Idaho and Box Elder, Cache and Rich Counties in Utah and Lincoln County in Wyoming.)

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to document the analysis and disclose the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives to revise the Caribou Travel Plan for the Caribou portion of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. The travel plan analysis will address both summer and winter travel; or snow-free and snow seasons. The Travel Plan Revision will tier to the FEIS for the 2003 Caribou Revised Forest Plan. The Caribou portion of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest is located in Southeast Idaho and portions of Western Wyoming and Northern Utah.

DATES: To be most useful to the analysis, comments concerning the proposed action should be received in writing 30 days from the publication of this notice. Comments will be accepted after that date. The draft environmental impact statement is expected in September of 2004 and the final environmental impact statement is expected February of 2005. If you would like to be included on our mailing list concerning this analysis, please contact Cynthia Hobach at 208-524-7500 or chobach@fs.fed.us.

ADDRESSES: Please send written comments to Caribou Travel Plan Revision Team, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, 1405 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401. Written comments may also be electronically submitted to dtiller@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Debrah Tiller, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, 1405 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401 or visit our Web site at www.fs.fed.us/r4/caribou-targhee, under the Travel Plan Revision headline.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed action, maps and other supporting documents can be viewed at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/caribou-targhee> under the Caribou travel plan revision

heading. Hard copy documents are available at local forest offices. We are coordinating efforts with Tribal governments, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and local County Commissioners. The following public meetings have been scheduled to aid people in understanding the proposed action and the analysis process, all meetings will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.:

March 18th in Madlad, ID at the Westside Ranger District, 195 South, 300 East
March 25th in Montpelier, ID at the Allred Building, Bear Lake County Fairgrounds, 21620 US Highway 30
March 31st in Preston, ID at the Robinson Building, Franklin County Fairgrounds, 185 West, 2nd North
April 1st, in Pocatello ID at the Westside Ranger District, 4350 Cliffs Drive
April 7th in Soda Springs, ID at the Tigert Middle School, 250 East, 2nd South
April 8th in Afton, WY at the City of Afton Building, 416 South Washington
April 15th in Idaho Falls, ID at the Caribou-Targhee Forest Headquarters, 1405 Hollipark Drive
April 21st in Fort Hall, ID at the Tribal Business Center, 306 Pima Drive

Purpose and Need for Action

The Caribou Travel Plan does not comply with programmatic direction set by the 2003 Caribou Revised Forest Plan. The travel does not comply with plan direction to manage most snow-free motorized travel on designated routes. The Revised Forest Plan also prescribes a limit on open motorized route densities during the snow-free season for many areas of the forest. The current travel plan exceeds these limits in some areas of the forest.

Proposed Action

The proposed action will meet plan direction by designating motorized routes in areas that were managed as open to cross-country motorized travel during the snow-free season. The proposed action will also address snow season motorized access through winter range prescriptions.

Possible Alternatives

Alternatives may include increasing or decreasing open motorized routes in various prescription areas. Alternatives that would not meet the prescribed open motorized route densities would require amending the Revised Forest Plan. Alternatives to the proposed action may include additional areas managed for a non-motorized experience during the snow season.

Lead and Cooperating Agencies

The USDA Forest Service.

Responsible Official

Jerry B. Reese, Caribou-Targhee Forest Supervisor, 1405 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls, ID 83401.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

Travel planning is an allocation process based on resource and social concerns. The framework for the decision is set by the programmatic direction outlined in the 2003 Caribou Revised Forest Plan: Most cross-country motorized travel is restricted to designated routes; snow-free designated motorized routes will adhere to the prescribed open motorized route densities; critical winter range areas will have designated motorized routes during the snow season and additional non-motorized areas for the snow season will be considered.

Scoping Process

Open houses will be held in area communities to discuss the proposed action and possible alternatives for revising the Caribou travel plan. Our electronic website contains more specific information, and public comment can be received electronically. See e-mail addresses, website addresses and public meeting information listed above.

Comment Requested

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement. Additional public comments will be accepted after publication of the DEIS anticipated by September 2004. The Final EIS and Records of Decision for the Caribou Travel Plan Revision are expected in February of 2005.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review: A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environment 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. 512, 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 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.

Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available to public inspection.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21)

Dated: March 4, 2004.

Jerry B. Reese,

Forest Supervisor, Caribou-Targhee National Forest.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Reissuance of 10-Year Term Grazing Permits and Authorization To Graze Cattle in the Tushar Mountain Range, Beaver Ranger District, Fishlake National Forest in Iron and Piute Counties, UT

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 reissuing 10-year term grazing permits to continue authorizing cattle grazing on eight grazing allotments (North-Indian Creek, Circleville, South Beaver, Marysville, Pine Creek/Sulphurdale, Cottonwood, Ten Mile, Junction) within the Beaver Ranger District and located on the Tushar Mountain Range near the city of Beaver in Beaver and Piute Counties, Utah. The permit reissuance would authorize the continued use of current grazing systems with presently permitted cattle numbers and seasons of use.

DATES: Comments in response to this Notice of Intent concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing on or before April 5, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: Tushar Mountain Range EIS, Attn: Dave Grider, Dixie National Forest, 1785 North Wedgewood Lane, Cedar City, UT 84720. Additional information can be obtained from Dave Grider, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, by phone: 435-865-3731 or by e-mail: dgrider@fs.fed.us.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Dayle Flanigan, District Ranger, is the responsible official for this environmental impact statement. His address is: U.S. Forest Service, Beaver Ranger District, 575 South Main, P.O. Box E, Beaver, UT, 84713.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dave Grider, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Dixie National Forest, 1789 N. Wedgewood Lane, Cedar City, UT 84720, (435) 865-3731. A Scoping Document has been prepared to provide project information and request public review and comment. This Scoping Document can be accessed electronically at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/fishlake/projects/index.shtml>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: These eight allotments comprise 173,000 acres (two-thirds) of the 260,000-acre District on the eastern edge of the Basin and Range province. Elevations range from 5,200' in Sevier Valley to over 12,000' on Mount Belknap in the Tushar Range. Vegetation types range from sagebrush-grass and pinion-juniper in the valley floors to mountain brush, aspen, mixed conifer, and alpine-forb communities. Riparian ecosystems occur within many of these communities. Alpine riparian areas occur on Lake Peak and in the heads of North Creek. The major river drainage is Beaver River, which flows into the closed Great Basin. The South Beaver and North-Indian Creek

Allotments include water bodies that are impaired or are tributary to streams that are impaired, but they do not exceed the State standard for total maximum daily load (TMDL) of pollutants, so the streams and lakes on these allotments are not included on the State's 303(d) list of waters not meeting water quality standards. The Circleville Allotment includes streams that flow to a segment of the Sevier River that is water quality limited, but no 303(d) streams are located in the Circleville Allotment.

Proposed Action: Reissuing 10-year term grazing permits to continue authorizing cattle grazing, on eight allotments on the Tushar Mountain Range within the Beaver Ranger District, is proposed. Implementation of existing Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) would prescribe the manner and extent to which livestock operations would be conducted and would: (1) Develop allotment specific objectives which would direct livestock management to either maintain desired conditions or improve rangelands to desired conditions, (2) authorize management of livestock and construction or maintenance of improvements which would result in meeting objectives, (3) develop action plans to meet resource goals, objectives, and management requirements for a wide array of rangeland resources and uses concurrent with livestock grazing, (4) incorporate Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) standards and guidelines (as amended) for forage utilization and riparian area management, and (5) develop a monitoring plan that describes a measurable means of determining whether goals and objectives are being met. This proposed action does not intend to address livestock capacity and stocking rates. The number and class of livestock, season of use, and grazing system required to meet desired conditions is a permit administration decision, not a NEPA decision. Changes in numbers and seasons would not be addressed by the proposed action or alternative(s). The proposal does not intend to change the grazing systems currently in use. None of the project allotments require new structural range improvements (fences or water developments) for cattle management. The proposed action does include provision for maintenance of existing structural and non-structural range improvements. Vegetation type-conversions (sagebrush and pinion-juniper to grass/forb types) would be subject to periodic maintenance on the North-Indian Creek, Marysville,