Signed in Washington, DC on January 14, 2009.

Arlen L. Lancaster,

Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation and Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

[FR Doc. E9–1168 Filed 1–21–09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–16–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Sequoia National Forest; California; Piute Fire Restoration

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The project area for this analysis is the approximately 32,890 acre portion of the Piute Fire on National Forest System lands; approximately 1,700 acres of the fire restoration project area fall within the former Clear CreekProject area. The USDA Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a proposal to treat approximately 2,260 acres of fire killed and damaged trees, both through removal and treating on site, in the Piute Fire burned area; some of these treatment areas are within the former Clear Creek Project area. The land allocations within the fire area, as identified in the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan SupplementalEIS, are old forest emphasis, general forest, threat zone, defense zone, protected activity centers for spotted owls, spotted owl home range core areas, and riparian conservation areas adjacent to perennial, seasonal, and ephemeral streams.

There is a need in the Piute Fire area for: (1) the recovery of the economic value of timber killed or severely injured by the fire, in a expeditious manner, for the purposes of reducing the cost of reforestation activities and supplying wood fiber to local sawmills; (2) the prevention of a future high intensity, stand-replacing wildfire by reducing long term fuel loading for the purpose of facilitating future fire management techniques (prescribed fire and wildland fire use); (3) the recruitment and retention of both short and long term large down logs and snag habitat, for the purpose of providing sufficient burned forest habitat for dependent species; (4) the re-vegetation of conifer stands and other plant and animal habitats that were burned; (5) the improvement of long term soil productivity, by repairing roads and establishing effective ground cover in severely burned areas, for the purpose of minimizing soil erosion and begin to replace soil organic material; and (6) the reduction of safety hazards to the public and forest workers from falling trees.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by February 23, 2009. The draft environmental impact statement is expected August 2009, and the final environmental impact statement is expected February 2010.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: Sue Porter, Project Leader, Kern RiverRanger District, P.O. Box 9, Kernville, CA 93238, and Attention: Piute FireRestoration. Comments may be sent via e-mail *smporter@fs.fed.us* or via facsimile to 760–376–3795. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record on this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the respondent with standing to appeal the subsequent decision.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sue Porter, 760–376–3781, extension 650. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1–800–877–8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

In June and July 2008, the Piute Fire burned approximately 37,025 acres on the Sequoia National Forest, Bureau of Land Management and private lands. The fire burned with varying intensity across a variety of plant communities(chaparral, oak woodland, Jeffrey pine, mixed conifer, pinyon-juniper, and desert shrub). Approximately 60% of the forested areas of the fire were burned such that 75–100% of the trees were killed and the duff and litter that protected the soil was completely consumed. In these areas, the fire resulted in the destruction of wildlife habitat for sensitive species and the loss of old forest characteristics. Near the end of the fire, two localized, heavy rainstorm events occurred within the Piute Fire area. These events resulted in high rates of soil erosion in the fire area, sedimentation of streams, and debris flows that extended into the Kern River from Erskine Creek and ClearCreek and into the Walker Basin from Thompson Creek.

The fire killed tens of thousands of trees that, if left untreated, will contribute to extremely high fuel loading over time. As these dead trees fall and fuel accumulates, future fires will be even more severe. Treating the dead and dying tree component of the landscape is the first step in restoring forest health, reducing long term fuel loading, and restoring the historic fire regime, thereby reducing the impacts of fires on the future forest and contributing to the restoration of old forest habitats. Without treatment to begin to restore the fire area, significant additional impacts to soil, water quality, heritage resources, and wildlife habitat are likely over the short and long term.

This environmental impact statement (EIS) will address: treating the dead and dying tree component of the landscape, reforesting burned conifer areas, and repairing roads to reduce sediment delivery to streams. The process of completing these treatments would reduce soil erosion by immediately increasing effective ground cover (limbs, twigs, and small boles) and maintain soil productivity for tree growth.

Proposed Action

The proposed action would remove dead and dying trees, using ground-based logging methods, to recover the economic value of timber on about 510 acres and treated on site to reduce future fuel loading on an additional 1,750 acres. Trees posing a safety hazard to the public and forest workers would be removed along roads. Roads would be reconstructed and repaired to facilitate access to treatment areas and to improve watershed condition. Slash would be treated to provide ground cover and reduce short term fuel loading. Conifer seedlings would be planted to begin reforestation of the fire area. Protection would be applied to sensitive plant and wildlife species and heritage resources.

The proposed action is consistent with the 1988 Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest PlanAmendment Record of Decision, and the 1990 Mediated Settlement Agreement.

Possible Alternatives

Other alternatives will be developed based on significant issues identified during the scoping process for the environmental impact statement. All alternatives will need to respond to the specific condition of providing benefits equal to or better than the current condition. Alternatives being considered at this time include: (1) No Action, and (2) the Proposed Action.

Responsible Official

Tina Terrell, Forest Supervisor, Sequoia National Forest, 1839 South Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257, is the responsible official. As the responsible official, she will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to Forest Service appeal regulations (36 CFR Part 215).

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The decision to be made is whether to adopt and implement the proposed action, an alternative to the proposed action, or take no action to remove or treat fire killed and damaged trees in the project area, to plant conifer seedlings, to undertake road improvements, or to implement fuel treatments.

Scoping Process

The notice of intent initiates the scoping process, which guides the development of the environmental impact statement.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such manner that they are useful to the agency's preparation of the environmental impact statement. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions. The submission of timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in subsequent administrative appeal or judicial review.

Dated: January 13, 2009.

Tina J. Terrell,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. E9–1043 Filed 1–21–09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. chapter 35).

AGENCY: U.S. Census Bureau.

Title: 2008 Panel of the Survey of Income & Program Participation, Wave 3 Topical Modules.

OMB Control Number: 0607–0944.

Form Number(s): SIPP 28305(L) Director's Letter; SIPP/CAPI Automated Instrument; SIPP 28003 Reminder Card.

Type of Request: Revision of a currently approved collection.

Burden Hours: 143,303.

Number of Respondents: 94,500.

Average Hours Per Response: 30 minutes.

Needs and Uses: The U.S. Census Bureau requests authorization from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to conduct the Wave 3 interview for the 2008 Panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The core SIPP and reinterview instruments were previously cleared.

The SIPP represents a source of information for a wide variety of topics and allows information for separate topics to be integrated to form a single and unified database so that the interaction between tax, transfer, and other government and private policies can be examined. Government domestic policy formulators depend heavily upon the SIPP information concerning the distribution of income received directly as money or indirectly as in-kind benefits and the effect of tax and transfer programs on this distribution. They also need improved and expanded data on the income and general economic and financial situation of the U.S. population. The SIPP has provided these kinds of data on a continuing basis since 1983, permitting levels of economic well-being and changes in these levels to be measured over time.

The survey is molded around a central ''core'' of labor force and income questions that remain fixed throughout the life of a panel. The core is supplemented with questions designed to answer specific needs, such as estimating eligibility for government programs, examining pension and health care coverage, and analyzing individual net worth. These supplemental questions are included with the core and are referred to as ''topical modules.''

The topical modules for the 2008 Panel Wave 3 are Welfare Reform and Retirement and Pension. The Welfare Reform topical module was previously conducted in the SIPP 2004 Panel Wave 8 instrument. The Retirement and Pension topical module was previously conducted in the SIPP 2004 Panel Wave 7 instrument. Wave 3 interviews will be conducted from May 1, 2009 through August 31, 2009.

The SIPP is designed as a continuing series of national panels of interviewed households that are introduced every few years, with each panel having durations of approximately 3 to 4 years. The 2008 Panel is scheduled for four years and four months and includes thirteen waves which began September 1, 2008. All household members 15 years old or over are interviewed using regular proxy-respondent rules. They are interviewed a total of thirteen times (thirteen waves), at 4-month intervals, making the SIPP a longitudinal survey. Sample people (all household members present at the time of the first interview) who move within the country and reasonably close to a SIPP primary sampling unit (PSU) will be followed and interviewed at their new address. Individuals 15 years old or over who enter the household after Wave 1 will be interviewed; however, if these people move, they are not followed unless they happen to move along with a Wave 1 sample individual.

The OMB has established an Interagency Advisory Committee to provide guidance for the content and procedures for the SIPP. Interagency subcommittees were set up to recommend specific areas of inquiries for supplemental questions.

The Census Bureau developed the 2008 Panel Wave 3 topical modules through consultation with the SIPP OMB Interagency Subcommittee. The questions for the topical modules address major policy and program concerns as stated by this subcommittee and the SIPP Interagency Advisory Committee.

Data provided by the SIPP are being used by economic policymakers, the Congress, state and local governments, and federal agencies that administer social welfare or transfer payment programs, such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture.

Affected Public: Individuals or Households.

Frequency: Every 4 months.

Respondent's Obligation: Voluntary.

Legal Authority: Title 13, United States Code, Section 182.

OMB Desk Officer: Brian Harris-Kojetin, (202) 395–7314.

Copies of the above information collection proposal can be obtained by calling or writing Diana Hynek, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, (202) 482–0266, Department of Commerce, Room 6625, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at *dhynek@doc.gov*).

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to Brian Harris-Kojetin, OMB Desk Officer either by fax (202–395–7245) or e-mail (*bharrisk@omb.eop.gov*).