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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

Deadman Creek Timber Sales, Colville National Forest, Ferry County, WA

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service, USDA, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on a proposal to harvest and regenerate timber for twenty million board feet on one or more timber sales and to construct and reconstruct roads in the Deadman Creek area. The Proposed Action will be in compliance with the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as amended, which provides the overall guidance for management of this area. The Proposed Action is within portions of the Deadman Creek watershed on the Kettle Falls Ranger District and scheduled for implementation in fiscal year 1999. The Colville National Forest invites written comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis. The agency will give notice of the full environmental analysis and decision making process so interested and affected people may be able to participate and contribute in the final decision.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by December 15, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments and suggestions concerning the management of this area to Meredith Webster, District Ranger, 255 West 11th, Kettle Falls, Washington 99141.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the Proposed Action and EIS should be directed to Meredith Webster, District Ranger or to Mike Porter, Planner, 255 West 11th, Kettle Falls, Washington 99141 (phone: 509-738-6111).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Proposed Action includes harvesting timber and constructing roads through one or more timber sales.

The timber sales would be located approximately seven miles north of Washington State Highway 20 and nine miles west of Washington State Highway 395. The proposed sales would harvest approximately twenty million board feet on about 4000 acres through commercial thinning, individual tree selection, partial overstory removal and shelterwood harvest methods. Twenty-eight (28) miles of new road would be constructed.

The Deadman Creek timber sales are proposed within the Deadman Creek watershed on the Kettle Falls Ranger District. This analysis will evaluate a range of alternatives for implementation of the timber sales. The area being analyzed is approximately 40,800 acres. The Proposed Action includes portions of the Twin Sister Inventoried Roadless Area and the Hoodoo Inventoried Roadless Area which were considered but not selected for Wilderness designation.

The Draft EIS will be tiered to the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan's Management Area direction for this analysis area is approximately 51 percent Wood/Forage Emphasis (Management Area 7), 10 percent Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation (Management Area 11), 8 percent Scenic/Timber (Management Area 5), and lesser amounts of Winter Range (Management Area 8), Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation (Management Area 10), Old Growth Dependent Species Habitat (Management Area 1), Recreation (Management Area 3A), and Scenic/Winter Range (Management Area 6). There is also 11 percent in other ownership within the analysis area.

No harvest and no road construction will be proposed within the Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation areas or the Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized Recreation areas. The other ownership areas are included only for analysis of effects.

Preliminary issues identified include:

1. Timber harvest and road construction within Forest Plan Inventoried Roadless areas and other unroaded areas greater than 1000 acres;
2. Creation of Lynx foraging habitat may conflict with Historic Range of Variability direction found in Eastside Screens Forest Plan amendment;

3. Forest Health is a concern due to overstocked conditions which increase the possibility of insect and disease problems;

4. The projects must be compatible with existing recreational uses; and

5. State Water Quality Standards must be met in Deadman Creek, as well as other waters in and downstream from the planning area.

A range of alternatives will be considered, including a no-action alternative. Based on issues identified to date, alternatives to be considered include: (1) the number, sizes, and locations of areas considered for treatment; (2) the amount of road constructed for access; (3) the type of harvest and post-harvest treatments prescribed; and (4) the number, types, and locations of other integrated resource projects.

Initial scoping began in May, 1996. The scoping process will include the following: identify and clarify issues; identify key issues to be analyzed in depth; explore alternatives based on themes which will be derived from issues recognized during scoping activities; and identify potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives.

An informal public meeting is planned to be held at the Kettle Falls Ranger District office during November, 1996. The date, time, and location of this meeting will be announced at a later date. The Forest Service is seeking information, comments, and assistance from other agencies, organizations, Indian Tribes, and individuals who may be interested in or affected by the Proposed Action. This input will be used in preparation of the draft EIS. Your comments are appreciated throughout the analysis process.

The draft EIS is to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public review by April, 1997. At that time, copies of the draft EIS will be distributed to interested and affected agencies, organizations, Indian Tribes, and members of the public for their review and comment. The EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the draft EIS in the Federal Register. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA notice appears in the Federal Register. It is important that those interested in the management of the Colville National Forest participate at that time.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice at this early stage of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft EIS 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 EIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final EIS 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 EIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft EIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft EIS. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft EIS 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.

The final EIS is scheduled to be available by September, 1997. In the final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to substantive comments received during the comment period for the draft EIS. The responsible official is Colville National Forest Supervisor, Edward L. Schultz. The responsible official will decide which, if any, of the alternatives will be implemented. The decision and the rationale for the decision will be documented in the Record of Decision, which will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations (36 CFR Part 215).

Dated: October 25, 1996.
Edward L. Schultz,
Forest Supervisor.
[FR Doc. 96-28895 Filed 11-8-96; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Eclet Creek Watershed, DeWitt, Guadalupe, Karnes, and Wilson Counties, Texas Floodwater Retarding Structure No. 7

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of a finding of no significant impact.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR Part 1500); and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Regulations (7 CFR Part 650); the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, gives notice that an environmental impact statement is not being prepared for the Eclet Creek Watershed, Floodwater Retarding Structure No. 7, Karnes County, Texas.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Harry W. Oneth, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 101 South Main, Temple, Texas 76501-7682, Telephone (817) 774-1214.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The environmental assessment of this federally assisted action indicates that the project will not cause significant local, regional, or national impacts on the environment. As a result of these findings, Harry W. Oneth, State Conservationist, has determined that the preparation and review of an environmental impact statement is not needed for this project.

The project will reduce flooding and improve surface water quality in and below Floodwater Retarding Structure No. 7. The recommended actions included in the original work plan proposed installing 11 floodwater retarding structures, as well as land treatment measures. An environmental assessment was completed on five of the floodwater retarding structures in July of 1991. Four of the five floodwater retarding structures assessed at that time have been constructed. This particular environmental assessment addresses the installation of an additional site, Floodwater Retarding Structure No. 7.

Installation of this site, including dam, emergency spillway, and sediment pool, will require 99.0 acres. The dam and emergency spillway will be planted to grasses that have wildlife values. The dam and emergency spillway will be fenced to control livestock, therefore greatly benefiting ground nesting birds. This structure will not impact any

prime farmland. Downstream flooding of wildlife habitat will be reduced.

Floodwater Retarding Structure No. 7 will create about 43 acres of aquatic habitat, as well as creating a fisheries resource where none exists. Woody vegetation will be removed from about 4 acres of riparian habitat. The original work plan provided for financial and technical assistance for the installation of this site. This environmental assessment will complete the necessary requirements for Site 7. Federal assistance will be provided under authority of Public Law 83-566, 83rd Congress, 68 Stat. 666, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1001-1008). Total project costs for Floodwater Retarding Structure No. 7 are \$931,200, of which \$765,400 will be paid from Public Law 83-566 funds and \$165,800 from local funds.

The Notice of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been forwarded to the Environmental Protection Agency and to various Federal, State, and local agencies and interested parties. A limited number of copies of the FONSI are available to fill single copy requests at the above address. Basic data developed during the environmental assessment are on file and may be reviewed by contacting Harry W. Oneth.

No administrative action on implementation of the proposal will be taken until 30 days after the date of this publication in the Federal Register.

Dated: October 31, 1996.
Tomas M. Dominguez,
Deputy State Conservationist.
[FR Doc. 96-28861 Filed 11-8-96; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3410-16-M

Rural Telephone Bank

Determination of the 1996 Fiscal Year Interest Rates on Rural Telephone Bank Loans

AGENCY: Rural Telephone Bank, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of 1996 fiscal year interest rates determination.

SUMMARY: In accordance with 7 CFR 1610.10, the Rural Telephone Bank fiscal year 1996 cost of money rates have been established as follows: 6.05% and 6.42% for advances from the liquidating account and financing account, respectively (fiscal year is the period beginning October 1 and ending September 30).

Except for loans approved from October 1, 1987, through December 21, 1987 where borrowers elected to remain at interest rates set at loan approval, all loan advances made during fiscal year 1996 under bank loans approved in