

This information is used by policy analysts, foresters, educators, and researchers to facilitate the planning and implementation of forest policies and programs.

The Forest Service's direction and authority to conduct the NWOS is from the Forest and Range Land Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 and the Forest and Range Land Renewable Resources Act of 1978. These acts assign responsibility for the inventory and assessment of forest and related renewable resources to the Forest Service. Additionally, the importance of an ownership survey in this inventory and assessment process is highlighted in Section 253(c) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 and the recommendations of the Second Blue Ribbon Panel on the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program.

Previous iterations of the NWOS were conducted in 1978, 1993, and 2002–2006. Approval for the last iteration of the NWOS expired on December 31, 2006. Between 2002 and 2006, the NWOS was implemented on an annual basis to provide more robust and current information and to conform with the overall FIA sampling protocols. As planned, approval for the information collection was allowed to lapse after 2006, to permit a full assessment of the program that has now been completed. If reinstated, the NWOS will operate for another 5-year cycle, with federal approval being sought as necessary to cover the full survey cycle, before the next full reassessment occurs.

Information will be collected related to:

- The characteristics of the owners' landholdings;
- Ownership objectives;
- Forest use and management;
- Owners' concerns;
- Future uses of the forest land; and
- Landowner demographics.

The NWOS provides widely cited benchmarks for the number, extent, and characteristics of private forest land owners of the United States. These results have been used to assess the sustainability of forest resources at national, regional, and state levels; to implement and assess forest land owner assistance programs; and to answer a variety of questions with topics ranging from fragmentation to the economics of private timber production.

The respondents will be a statistically selected group of individuals, families, American Indian tribes, partnerships, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and other private groups that own forest land in the United States. Public records will be used to collect names and addresses for a systematic set of points

identified as forest land. The number of forest-land owners to be contacted in each state will be determined by the number of private forest-land owners and the sampling intensity.

The NWOS will utilize a mixed-mode survey technique involving a self-administered mail questionnaire and telephone interviews. First, a pre-notice letter or postcard will be sent to all potential respondents describing this information collection and explaining why the information is being collected. Second, a questionnaire with a cover letter and pre-paid return envelope will be mailed to the potential respondents. The cover letter will reiterate the purpose of this information collection and provide the respondents with all legally required information. Third, a reminder will be mailed to thank the respondents and encourage the non-respondents to respond. Those who have yet to respond will be sent a new questionnaire, cover letter, and pre-paid return envelope. Telephone interviews will be used for follow-up with non-respondents.

FIA personnel will administer the mail portion of this information collection. The telephone follow-ups will be conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Data will be compiled and edited by FIA personnel.

FIA personnel will analyze the collected data. National, regional, and state-level results will be distributed through print and/or electronic media.

This information collection will generate scientifically based, up-to-date information about private forest-land owners in the United States. The results of these efforts will provide more reliable information on this important and dynamic segment of the United States population, thus facilitating more complete assessments of the country's forest resources, and improved planning and implementation of forestry programs.

*Estimate of Annual Burden:* 20 minutes.

*Type of Respondents:* Individuals, families, American Indian Tribes, partnerships, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and other private groups that own forest land.

*Estimated Annual Number of Respondents:* 7,500.

*Estimated Annual Number of Responses per Respondent:* 1.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents:* 2,500 hours.

#### Comment Is Invited

Comment is invited on: (1) Whether this collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes and

the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical or scientific utility; (2) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

All comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses when provided, will be a matter of public record. Comments will be summarized and included in the submission request toward Office of Management and Budget approval.

Dated: March 14, 2008.

**David A. Cleaves,**

*Associate Deputy Chief, Research & Development.*

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**BILLING CODE 3410–11–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### **Black Hills National Forest, Bearlodge Ranger District, WY and Northern Hills Ranger District, SD, North Zone Range 08 Analysis**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement; cancellation.

**SUMMARY:** On November 5, 2007, the **Federal Register** published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the North Zone Range 08 Analysis on the Black Hills National Forest (72 FR 62428–62429). The responsible officials for this analysis have decided that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted for this project. An Environmental Assessment will be prepared for the North Zone Range 08 analysis. The responsible officials will document their rationale in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to be subsequently prepared. The FONSI will accompany the Decision Notice for this project. The Notice of Intent is hereby cancelled.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Alice Allen, Environmental Coordinator, TEAMS Enterprise, Forest

Service, 330 Mt. Rushmore Rd, Custer, SD 57730, or at 605-673-4853.

Dated: March 13, 2008.

**Dennis Jaeger,**

*Deputy Forest Supervisor, Black Hills National Forest.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### North San Juan Sheep and Goat EIS

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, Rio Grande National Forest, USDA.

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

**SUMMARY:** This NEPA analysis began as an environmental assessment in 2006, then as Interdisciplinary Team discussions took place, it was recognized that completion of an environmental impact statement (EIS) would be more appropriate. The project is analyzing the action to continue to permit livestock (domestic sheep and goats) grazing within the North San Juan Sheep and Goat Allotments Analysis Area (hereinafter referred to as the Analysis Area) under an Adaptive Management strategy.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by 30 days from the date of this notice. The draft environmental impact statement is expected December 31, 2008 and the final environmental impact statement is expected February 28, 2009.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to Mr. Kelly Garcia, Team Leader, Rio Grande National Forest, Conejos Peak Ranger District, 15571 CR T.5, LaJara, CO 81140. Electronic mail (e-mail with subject, North San Juan comments) may be sent to [comments-rocky-mountain.rio-grande-conejos-peak@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain.rio-grande-conejos-peak@fs.fed.us) and a FAX may be sent to (719) 274-6301.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Same as above.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Analysis area contains the Willow Mtn. Sheep and Goat (S&G) Allotment, Cornwall Mtn. S&G Allotment, Marble Mtn. S&G Allotment, Campo-Bonito S&G Allotments, Cropsy-Summit S&G Allotments, Elwood S&G Allotment, Treasure S&G Allotment, West Vega S&G Allotment, East Vega S&G Allotment, Upper Adams S&G Allotment and the North Fork-Middle Fork S&G Allotments.

### Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this action is to provide forage for permitted domestic livestock grazing in a manner that maintains or moves conditions toward achieving Forest Plan objectives and desired conditions. There is an overall need for greater management flexibility. More specifically, the need for this action is tied to any important resource, social, or economic disparity that may be found when comparing the existing condition in the Analysis Area to the Forest Plan desired conditions, as determined by the interdisciplinary team (IDT) and authorized officer on a site-specific basis.

### Proposed Action

The proposed action is to continue to permit livestock grazing within the North San Juan Sheep and Goats allotments analysis area, under an Adaptive Management strategy that would ensure meeting or moving toward the Rio Grande National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and project-specific desired conditions. This proposal also generates the need to develop new allotment management plans (AMPs).

### Responsible Official

The responsible official is the District Ranger, Rio Grande National Forest, Conejos Peak Ranger District, 15571 County Road T.5, La Jara, CO 81140.

### Nature of Decision To Be Made

This EIS will disclose the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed action and alternatives to that action. A separate Record of Decision (ROD), signed by the responsible official, will explain the management and environmental reasons for selecting an alternative to be implemented. The ROD will disclose the rationale for choosing the selected alternative; discuss the rationale for rejecting other alternatives; and disclose how the decision responds to the relevant issues.

The decision that the responsible official will make in the Record of Decision is whether or not to authorize some level of livestock grazing on all, part, or none of the Analysis Area given considerations of Forest Plan desired conditions, goals and objectives, and public input. If the decision is made to authorize some level of livestock grazing, the management framework will be described (including standards, guidelines, grazing management, and monitoring) so that desired condition objectives are met or that movement occurs toward those objectives in an acceptable timeframe.

### Scoping Process

The Rio Grande National Forest invited public comment and participation regarding this project through the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), public notice in the Valley Courier (January 21, 2006)—the newspaper of record and a scoping letter sent to potentially concerned public, tribal governments, State and other Federal agencies, (January 19, 2006). Comments received in these previous scoping efforts will be retained and considered in this EIS.

An additional comment period will be provided during scoping for this EIS in the form of this notice in the **Federal Register**, the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), public notice in the Valley Courier—the newspaper of record, and letters sent to potentially concerned public, tribal governments, State and other Federal agencies.

### Comment Requested

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement. The Forest Service invites written comments on the proposed action, including any issues to consider, as well as any concerns relevant to the analysis. In order to be most useful, scoping comments should be received within 30 days of publication of this Notice of Intent. Comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this Proposed Action and will be available for public inspection. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law, but persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within a specified number of days. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their