

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE****Forest Service****West Bear Vegetation Management Project; Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Summit County, UT**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Revised notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The Forest Supervisor of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest gives notice of the agency's intent to prepare an environmental impact statement on a proposal to manage forest land in the West Fork Bear River drainage. Temporary roads would be constructed to provide access for timber harvest in portions of the area. The proposal also includes reconstruction or relocation of some poorly designed or located existing roads. The headwaters of this drainage are located on the Evanston Ranger District about 40 miles south of Evanston, Wyoming in the Uinta Mountain Range. The proposed action was developed to meet Forest Plan vegetation management objectives for achieving forest vegetation composition, structure, and patterns in properly functioning condition. The analysis area includes approximately 16,000 acres. The proposal addresses lands located primarily in the Humpy Creek, Meadow Creek, West Bear and Mill City Creek drainages located in Township 1 North, Ranges 9 East and 10 East, Salt Lake Meridian.

The first notice of intent was published on pages 12963–12964 of the **Federal Register** on March 20, 2002 (Volume 67, Number 54). The project was delayed due to other priorities developing as the result of a large wildfire in the summer of 2002.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received in writing by March 7, 2005. A draft environmental impact statement is expected to be published in May 2005, with public comment on the draft material requested for a period of 45 days, and completion of a final environmental impact statement is expected in September, 2005.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to Stephen Ryberg, District Ranger, Evanston Ranger District, PO Box 1880, Evanston, WY. 82930. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to *comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-evanston-mtnview@fs.fed.us*.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Larry Johnson, Environmental Planner, (307) 789–3194, or Kent O'Dell, Timber Management Coordinator, (307) 782–6555, USDA Forest Service, Evanston Ranger District (see **ADDRESS** above.)

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Purpose and Need for Action**

The project purpose is to use timber harvest and prescribed fire meet Revised Wasatch-Cache National Forest Plan vegetation management objectives to move toward properly functioning condition and to move toward a variety of vegetation types, age classes, and patch sizes covering the landscape and contributing to healthy watersheds, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitats, recreation environments, and production of commodities such as wood and forage. The Revised Forest Plan (Page 4–29) identified a need to treat vegetation with the aspen, aspen/conifer, spruce-fir and mixed conifer forest types on the forest to maintain or move the forests toward properly functioning condition. A forest-wide assessment concluded that aspen communities as well as conifer, sagebrush and several other vegetation types are currently outside the historic range of variation, primarily related to the absence of naturally occurring fire.

**Proposed Action**

The proposal to salvage includes timber harvesting, prescribed burning, construction of temporary roads, intermittent service roads, and minor reconstruction of existing system roads. Treatment would involve group selection harvest in spruce-fir and mixed conifer stands, small (1 to 5 acre) patch cutting in mixed aspen/conifer stands, conifer removal and prescribed burning in aspen/conifer stands, and burning with aspen stands. The proposal includes retaining green trees and snags for wildlife habitat. Approximately 1,626 acres within 38 units would be treated under the proposal. Harvests would be accomplished using ground-based systems, and in conformance with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. Access to the timber would require the construction of approximately 7.2 miles of temporary roads, 2.1 miles of intermittent service system roads, and relocation of approximately 0.6 miles of existing system roads to reduce sedimentation and improve drainage. All temporary roads would be recontoured/rehabilitated after harvest. Proposed reconstruction or relocation of existing roads would emphasize improving drainage design of the roads near stream crossings and relocating or

improving drainage where the roads are near stream channels. No harvest or road construction would take place in inventoried roadless areas. Firelines would be constructed where needed prior to burning to reduce the probability of fire escaping the boundaries. Approximately 1.4 miles of firelines would be needed.

In addition to the No Action alternative, an alternative that would reduce road construction and emphasize prescribed fire without mechanical pretreatment is being considered. It would treat approximately 1,384 acres within 28 tentative harvest units. It would require construction of approximately 1.8 miles of temporary roads, 0.3 miles of intermittent service system road, and relocation of approximately 300 feet of an existing system road to reduce sedimentation and improve drainage. Temporary roads would be recontoured/rehabilitated after harvest as with the proposed action. An estimated 6.4 miles of firelines would be needed to accomplish the prescribed burning.

Preliminary issue identified include effects of the alternatives on threatened, endangered and sensitive (TES) species, land stability, erosion and sedimentation, fish and aquatic habitat, cultural resource sites, noxious weed spread, and conflicts with recreational traffic.

**Responsible Official**

The Responsible Official is Thomas L. Tidwell, Forest Supervisor, Wasatch-Cache National Forest, 8236 Federal Building, 125 South State Street, Salt Lake City, UT 86138.

**Nature of Decision To Be Made**

The decision to be made is whether to implement the proposed activities listed above.

A determination of effects on Canada lynx will be required from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Scoping Process**

The Forest Service invites comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis to be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). In addition, the Forest Service gives notice that it is beginning a full environmental analysis and decision-making process for this proposal so that interested or affected people may know how they can participate in the environmental analysis and contribute to the final decision. Knowledge of the issues will help establish the scope of the Forest Service environmental analysis and define the kind and range of alternatives to be considered. The

Forest Service welcomes any public comments on the proposal.

### 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 environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency's notice of availability appears in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate at that time. To be the most helpful, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible and may address the adequacy of the statement or the merits of the alternatives discussed.

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, 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 30-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.

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

Dated: February 7, 2005.

**Thomas L. Tidwell,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

[FR Doc. 05-2672 Filed 2-10-05; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-11-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Notice of Tri-County Advisory Committee Meeting

**AGENCY:** 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 Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest's Tri-County Resource Advisory Committee will meet on Thursday, March 3, 2005, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. in Deer Lodge, Montana, for a business meeting. The meeting is open to the public.

**DATES:** Thursday, March 3, 2005.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the USDA Service Center, 1002 Hollenback Road, Deer Lodge, Montana.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Thomas K. Reilly, Designated Forest Official (DFO), Forest Supervisor, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, at (406) 683-3973.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Agenda topics for this meeting includes a review of projects approved and proposed for funding as authorized under Title II of Public Law 106-393, new proposals for funding, review of a community fire plan, and public comment. If the meeting location is changed, notice will be posted in local newspapers, including The Montana Standard.

Dated: February 7, 2005.

**Thomas K. Reilly,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

[FR Doc. 05-2670 Filed 2-10-05; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-11-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

#### Notice of Intent

**AGENCY:** Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Utah State Office, announces its intention to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to evaluate the impacts of floodplain and stream channel modifications in the Coal Creek Watershed. A plan would be developed to reduce safety risks and property damage caused by flooding of Cedar City and agricultural lands, improve water quality, and address related resource and amenity issues for the community. The EIS will analyze the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of alternatives to the human environment, as identified in the NEPA planning process, including any structural and non-structural measures that would address resource concerns in Coal Creek floodplain.

The purpose of this notice is to request participation and invite comments from all those individuals and organizations interested in the development of the EIS.

**Proposed Action:** The section of Coal Creek that traverses through Cedar City, Utah has channel stability and capacity deficiencies that pose a threat to existing infrastructure and development. Typical summer, fall, and winter discharges through this section of Coal Creek range from 5 to 15 cubic feet per second (cfs). However, intense summer cloudburst events centered in the upper Coal Creek watershed during the past 100 years have resulted in several flood events with peak discharges of between 4,000 and 5,000 cfs. The peak snowmelt event on record is approximately 1,800 cfs.

The NRCS, in cooperation with Cedar City, proposes to modify portions of the Coal Creek channel that are located east of Interstate 15 within the corporate limits of Cedar City. Channel modifications are needed to protect existing infrastructure and development from damage or loss caused by bank erosion or flood water from a 100-year flood event and to eliminate the portion of the 100-year floodplain located outside the stream channel, as defined on existing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood hazard boundary maps. In conjunction with needed channel improvements, one or more irrigation diversion structures on Coal Creek may have to be relocated upstream from their current locations to eliminate existing flooding hazards. It is an NRCS goal to construct new diversion facilities that will