

dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov. An Alternative Evaluation Study (AES) and a Macro Corridor Study (MCS) has been prepared for the proposed project. All documents are available for public review prior to and during the public scoping meetings. The reports are available at the RUS address provided in this notice and on the agency's Web site at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm>, the offices of Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. and their Web site at: <http://www.minnkota.com>; and the following repositories: Aneta Public Library, 11995 19th St., Aneta, ND 58212-0088; Bismarck's Veterans Memorial Library, 515 N. 5th St., Bismarck, ND 58501-4057; Oliver County Auditor, 115 West Main, Center, ND 58530; City of Carrington Library, 55 9th Ave., Carrington, ND 58421-2017; Griggs County Library, 902 Burrel Ave., Cooperstown, ND 58425-0546; Goodrich Public Library, 122 McKinley Ave., Goodrich, ND 58444-0175; Grand Forks Library, 2110 Library Circle, Grand Forks, ND 58201-6324; Harvey Public Library, 119 10th St., Harvey, ND 58341-1531; Mayville Library, 52 Center Ave., Mayville, ND 58257-1299; Sheridan County Auditor, 215 East 2nd St., McClusky, ND 58356-1510; New Rockford Public Library, 811 First Ave. N, New Rockford, ND 58356-1510; Turtle Lake Public Library, 107 Eggert St., Turtle Lake, ND 58575-0540; Washburn Public Library, 705 Main Ave., Washburn, ND 58577-0637; and Northwood Public Schools and City Library, 300 35th St., Northwood, ND 58267.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the proposed action is to reallocate energy presently transmitted on an existing direct current (DC) line to the proposed 345 kV line. Currently, the output from the Milton R. Young Generation Station Unit 2 (Young 2) is purchased under contract by Minnkota and Minnesota Power; each utility receives approximately 50 percent of the output. Electricity generated by Young 2 flows over a dedicated DC, 465-mile transmission line from Center, North Dakota to Duluth, Minnesota, where it is converted back to alternating current (AC) for further transmission into the Minnesota Power and Minnkota service areas. Minnesota Power will take 100 percent ownership of the existing DC line and DC/AC conversion facilities in early 2010; the DC line will be used to deliver wind energy. In 2013, Minnkota will receive increasing allocations of Young 2 output until the year 2026 when Minnkota will purchase 100 percent of the Young 2 output. With no continuous capacity available to

Minnkota on the HVDC system, the power needs be moved over the AC transmission system to Minnkota's service territory.

Minnkota is seeking financing from RUS for its ownership of the proposed project. Before making a decision to provide financing for the proposed project, RUS is required to conduct an environmental review under NEPA in accordance with RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1794). Government agencies, private organizations, and the public are invited to participate in the planning and analysis of the proposed action. Representatives from RUS and Minnkota will be available at the scoping meetings to discuss the environmental review process, describe the proposed action, discuss the scope of environmental issues to be considered, answer questions, and accept comments. RUS will use comments and input provided in the preparation of the Draft EA. If RUS finds, based on the EA, that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, RUS will prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Public notification of the FONSI would be published in the **Federal Register** and in newspapers with circulation in the project area. RUS may take its final action on proposed actions requiring an EA (§ 1794.23) any time after publication of applicant notices that a FONSI has been made and any required review period has expired. When substantive comments are received on the EA, RUS may provide an additional period (15 days) for public review following the publication of its FONSI determination. Final action will not be taken until this review period has expired. Where appropriate to carry out the purposes of NEPA, RUS may impose, on a case-by-case basis, additional requirements associated with the preparation of an EA. If at any point in the preparation of an EA, RUS determines that the proposed action will have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement will be required. Any final action by RUS related to the proposed action will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal, State, and local environmental laws and regulations and completion of the environmental review requirements as prescribed in RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1794).

Dated: October 23, 2009.

Mark S. Plank,

Director, Engineering and Environmental Staff, Rural Utilities Service.

[FR Doc. E9-26146 Filed 10-29-09; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Shasta Trinity National Forest, South Fork Management Unit, California Rattlesnake Fuel Reduction and Forest Health Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The Hayfork District of the Shasta Trinity National Forest is proposing to use vegetation treatments to reduce risks from fire, improve forest health, and provide forest products on approximately 6,028 acres within the Rattlesnake watershed on the South Fork Management Unit of the Shasta Trinity National Forest. The active management needed in the Rattlesnake Fuel Reduction and Forest Health Project (Rattlesnake project) area to reduce fuels and stocking levels through thinning requires the removal of trees and biomass, some of which have commercial value. An estimated 33 million board feet of merchantable sawtimber, and an estimated 35,092 bone dry tons of biomass are expected to be removed. Providing wood products to meet regional and national needs is consistent with Forest Plan goals, standards and guidelines. The initial economic analysis shows that the average diameter and quantity of the material treated under this project would generally be insufficient to support a viable timber sale in today's market. The Forest Service will analyze these vegetation treatments within the constraints of the Shasta Trinity National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, 1995.

The proposed Rattlesnake project is in the vicinity of the Post Mountain and Forest Glen communities in southern Trinity County, California. The project area is within portions of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) boundaries for both of these communities and within the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area (AMA), and Management Area 19, Indian Valley/Rattlesnake, of the Shasta-Trinity Land and Resource Management Plan (USFS 1995, p. 4-64 & 4-65).

The project includes acreage in Township 1 North, Range 7 East, Sections 25 and 36, Township 1 North, Range 8 East, Sections 19-21, and 28-

33, Township 1 South, Range 7 East, Sections 1 and 12, Township I South, Range 8 East, Sections 4–9, 16–21 and 28–29, Humboldt Meridian; Township 30 North, Range 12 West, Sections 35, 34, 32, Township 29 North, Range 12 West, Sections 1–19, 22, 23, Township 29 North, Range 11 West, Sections 29, and 31–32, Mount Diablo Meridian. The project is located in Trinity County, 10 air miles south of Hayfork, California and 3 air miles east of Post Mountain, California.

DATES: Comments must be received no later than 30 days after publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. The draft environmental impact statement is expected in the spring of 2010 and the final environmental impact statement is expected the winter of 2010.

ADDRESSES: Please send written comments to Sandy Mack, TEAMS USFS Enterprise Unit, 1801 N. First, Hamilton, MT 59840–3114. Electronic comments may be submitted via e-mail to: *comments-pacificsouthwest-shasta-trinity-yollabolla-hayfork@fs.fed.us* with “Rattlesnake Project” as the subject.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the respondent with standing to participate in subsequent administrative review or judicial review.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sandy Mack, Project Team Leader, TEAMS USFS Enterprise Unit, 1801 N. First, Hamilton, MT 59840. Phone (406) 375–2638. Or contact Donna Harmon, South Fork Management Unit District Ranger, P.O. Box 159, Hayfork, CA 96041, (530) 628–5227. Information about this project is posted on the forest Web site (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity/projects>).

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

The purpose and need for the Rattlesnake project is reflected in the following three interrelated objectives:

- Reduce hazardous fuel conditions to reduce the potential for adverse impacts from wildfire to Forest System land, including within riparian and late successional reserves, and neighboring private land.

- Improve forest health and resiliency, including within riparian and late successional reserves.

- Provide timber products to help support the economic structure of local communities, and supply regional and national needs, when the materials removed to meet the first two objectives have commercial value.

The Rattlesnake project area overlaps the Trinity Pines/Post Mountain and the Forest Glen wildland urban interfaces, and is within five miles of Peanut to the north and Wildwood to the east. These dispersed residential communities are identified in the Trinity County Community Wildfire Protection Plan as having values “at risk” from wildfire. The town of Hayfork is approximately ten miles north of the project area. Both the National Fire Plan and the Ten-Year Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment place a priority on working collaboratively within communities in the WUI to reduce their risk from large-scale wildfire.

The project area receives high concentrations of dry lightning, as was experienced extensively in 2008. The Trinity County wildfires of 2008 burned 266,157 acres in three major complexes. It resulted in the death of 10 wildland firefighters, and required 15 mandatory evacuation orders for over 1,400 homes. The Rattlesnake project area straddles Highway 36 which serves as a main ingress, egress route for residents during a fire. The highway also provides added potential for human caused fires.

In addition to the neighboring residential communities at risk, there are forest resources in the project area that are also at risk from uncharacteristically severe fire. These resources include non-perennial stream corridors, late successional reserves, and high investment resources, such as tree plantations and the Bridgeville-Cottonwood 60 KV transmission line. Two roadless areas cross into the project area on the western edge (South Fork) and to the southern edge (Chinquapin) of the project. The Shasta-Trinity National Forest Late Successional Reserve Assessment identifies the potential for large, high intensity fire as a primary concern within the South Fork Late Successional Reserve (RC–330) which enters into the southern tip of the project area.

The Rattlesnake project is designed to strategically connect with fuel treatments implemented through the Post Mountain Stewardship project, and those planned in the Salt Timber Harvest and Fuel Hazard Reduction project. These projects are similar to the

Rattlesnake project, but are not connected actions.

Over half of the Rattlesnake project area, 55 percent, currently has moderate to high potential for crown fires. This is significant because crown fires normally are highly destructive, difficult to control, and present the greatest safety hazard to firefighters and the public. The desired condition is for fuels in the project area to support a surface fire, rather than a crown fire.

Approximately 57 percent of the Rattlesnake project area would have control problems in the event of a fire because of the current fuel conditions, measured by projected flame lengths greater than eight feet. Control efforts by hand crews would likely be effective in only 14 percent of the project area and would be ineffective in the remaining 86 percent of the area. The desired condition is for flame lengths to be four feet or less in the project area so that direct attack with hand crews would be possible. This is particularly important given the project area’s proximity to neighboring communities. The Shasta-Trinity National Forest Late Successional Reserve Assessment also identifies a desired condition of flame lengths less than four feet.

The project area needs fuel breaks to provide firefighters with a strategic place to defend against an oncoming fire.

Currently, stands in the Rattlesnake project area are overstocked. These dense stands contain excessive surface fuels, ladder fuels consisting of dense midstory and understory trees and shrubs, and continuous canopies of hardwood and conifer overstory trees. Competition for limited water, nutrients and sun in many highly stocked timber stands in the Rattlesnake project area has reduced the vigor, growth and resiliency to insects and disease of mixed conifer species. Thinning to accelerate growth is a priority, particularly in younger mid-successional stands in the South Fork Late Successional Reserve. The desired condition is for overstocked stands to be thinned to a relative stand density approximately 35% to 55%.

The purpose and need for the Rattlesnake project are consistent with Management Plan Goals #3, #10, #11, #34, #35, #36, #39, and #40 Shasta-Trinity Land and Resource Management Plan (USFS 1995, p. 4–5 and 4–6).

Proposed Action

The Rattlesnake project proposes vegetative management on a total of 6,028 acres in order to improve forest health, reduce risks from fire, and provide forest products. Approximately

396 acres of brush field would be burned and 5,540 acres would be thinned. Thinning would include:

- Thin from below: 3,610 acres,
- Hand thin to 10 inch diameter at breast height (dbh): 92 acres,
- Shaded fuel break: 1,707 acres of thin from below in a shaded fuel break,
- Shaded fuel break—thin to 8 inch dbh: 135 acres within perennial riparian reserves that intersect fuel breaks, but outside of the equipment exclusion zone,
- Plantation pre-commercial thin: 88 acres.

Sub-merchantable fuel would be reduced in all treatment units to desirable levels of between 5 and 10 tons of downed material per acre depending on the Forest Plan land allocation for the area.

Approximately 6.7 miles of new temporary roads would be needed to access units. Approximately 65.6 miles of system roads will require pre-haul maintenance, such as blading. Approximately 13.5 miles of system roads will require more earthwork and sight distance clearing before they can be safely used as haul roads.

Approximately 2.4 miles of unclassified routes, would require brushing and re-shaping for use with this project, and then decommissioned after use. Approximately 21 miles of system road and 7 miles of unclassified routes would be decommissioned after use for this project. Treatments are expected to produce 33 million board feet (mmbf) of potentially merchantable saw timber and 35,092 tons of biomass.

Responsible Official

J. Sharon Heywood, Forest Supervisor, Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The Forest Supervisor will decide whether to implement the proposed action, take an alternative action that meets the purpose and need, or take no action.

Scoping Process—Public Comment

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process, which guides the development of the environmental impact statement. The project will be included in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest's quarterly schedule of proposed actions (SOPA). Information on the proposed action will also be posted on the forest Web site (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity/projects>) and advertised in the Record Searchlight—a local newspaper.

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: October 21, 2009.

Donna F. Harmon,

*South Fork Management Unit District Ranger,
Shasta-Trinity National Forest.*

[FR Doc. E9-26064 Filed 10-29-09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Custer County Resource Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Custer County Resource Advisory Committee will meet in Custer, South Dakota. The purpose of the meeting is review and selection of project proposals to be funded by the 2009 allocation.

DATES: The meeting will be held November 17, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Black Hills National Forest Supervisors Office. Written comments should be sent to Lynn Kolund at 330 Mount Rushmore Road, Custer, South Dakota 57730. Comments may also be sent via e-mail to lkolund@fs.fed.us, or via facsimile to 605-673-5461.

All comments, including names and addresses when provided, are placed in the record and are available for public inspection and copying. The public may inspect comments received at 330 Mount Rushmore Road, Custer, South Dakota. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to 605-673-4853 to facilitate entry into the building.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lynn Kolund, Designated Federal Official, Hell Canyon Ranger District, 605-673-4853.

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 Standard Time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meeting is open to the public. Council discussion is limited to Forest Service

staff and Council members. However, persons who wish to bring 2009 Project Proposal matters to the attention of the Council may file written statements with the Council staff before or after the meeting. Public input sessions will be provided and individuals who made written requests by November 13, 2009 will have the opportunity to address the Council at the November 17, 2009 session.

Dated: October 26, 2009.

Lynn Kolund,

Designated Federal Official.

[FR Doc. E9-26157 Filed 10-29-09; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Institute of Standards and Technology

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and Examiner Applications

AGENCY: National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before December 21, 2009.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Diana Hynek, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 7845, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at dHynek@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Pamela P. Wong, Baldrige National Quality Program, Administration Building, Room 615, 100 Bureau Drive, Stop 1020, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899-1020; telephone (301) 975-4504, fax (301) 948-3716, e-mail pamela.wong@nist.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: