

Woodland Treatments (202 Acres)

The woodland treatments would cut all loblolly pine, Virginia pine, white pine, maples, yellow-poplar, and other species would be cut as needed to reduce competition. All pitch pine and Table mountain pine would be retained unless removal is necessary for safety or for equipment operability reasons. The treatment would include thinning oaks, hickories, and shortleaf pine to a basal area (BA) of 30–40 ft²/acre. All oak, hickory, and shortleaf pine would be left where (BA) is currently less than 30–40 ft²/acre. Three of these stands would be managed to benefit smooth coneflower.

After initial treatments are completed, the areas would be prescribe-burned on a periodic basis, every 1–5 years (prescribed burning is covered under existing NEPA Decisions). Herbicide, manual and mechanical methods would be applied to sprouts/seedlings within 1–2 years after the initial post-harvest prescribed burn to reduce competition. These methods would be applied up to two more times after the initial treatment if needed to reduce competition. For woodlands management, the type of herbicide, method of application, and timing of application would be the same as that proposed for site preparation and release treatments.

Manual and mechanical methods including but not limited to hand tools (chainsaws, brush saws), and/or heavy equipment (tractor with mower, gyro-track) would be used to control sprouts and seedlings of tree species to maintain the woodland condition. Mechanical treatments would grind up or masticate undesirable understory vegetation.

Connected Actions

The following activities would be conducted in connection with vegetation management activities.

- *System Road Construction:* Twelve (12) system roads would be built providing access to 20 loblolly timber stands. These new roads are needed to provide access during timber harvest and to provide for long term resource management. These roads are designed by Forest Service engineers to specific standards that include designing drainage structures such as culvert installations, inside slope ditching, road crown specifications, widened turn-around, gates, and signage. Total specified system road construction is estimated at 6.5 miles but would vary once actual design is completed. Information on roads is contained in the road analysis.

- *Road Reconstruction and Maintenance:* System road

reconstruction and maintenance would be needed on approximately 60 miles of roads. Reconstruction work would consist of but not be limited to graveling road surfaces, replacing culverts—including replacements for aquatic organism passage, ditch cleaning, removing brush and trees along road rights-of-way, installing, repairing or replacing gates and correcting road safety hazards. Road maintenance would consist of spot gravel replacement, blading, cleaning culverts, brushing and mowing.

- *Temporary Roads:* Log landings that have no access to existing roads would be accessed by a temporary road that connects to the forest transportation system. Temporary roads are low-standard roads generally under 10 percent grade and road widths less than 14 feet. Approximately 21.7 miles of temporary roads are needed for access. Most temporary roads would be in the form of utilizing existing undesignated “woods” roads that already exist in the forest, that are in suitable locations, and for the most part have stabilized cut and fill slopes that would not be disturbed. Upon completion of treatments, temporary roads would be closed, obliterated and adequate erosion and storm water control measures completed and replanted with vegetation.

- *Skid Trails:* Skid trails would be used to skid logs to log landings. They would be closed after use with adequate storm water and erosion control measures.

- *Log Landings:* Log landings are locations where logs are piled and then loaded onto trucks. Existing landings sites would be used as practicable to limit soil effects (compaction). They would be closed after use with adequate storm water and erosion control measures.

Possible Alternatives

The Proposed Action and another action alternative are proposed for achieving the stated purpose and need, as well as a No-Action Alternative. The other action alternatives was developed to respond to issues raised by the public during scoping.

Responsible Official

The Andrews Pickens District Ranger, Sumter national Forest is the responsible official for this project.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The District Ranger will decide whether or not to implement the action as proposed or an alternative way to achieve the desired outcome.

Scoping Process

The scoping process for this project occurred when the original NOI was published in 2010. Issues identified during the scoping period were used to determine the alternatives considered and to frame the effects analysis. This proposal has been listed in the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests Schedule of Proposed Actions since 2010.

Dated: September 17, 2012.

Mike Crane,

District Ranger.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Notice of Intent To Prepare a Joint Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service, together with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), will prepare a joint Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to assess the effects of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recommendations on National Forest System lands for the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP). The CPUC granted Southern California Edison (SCE) approval to build TRTP in Decision 09–12–044 on non-federal lands, and the Forest Service approved SCE to implement the TRTP on National Forest System lands in a 2010 Record of Decision (ROD). The decision required SCE to consult with the FAA for aviation safety. The FAA recommended installing marker balls on certain transmission line spans and aviation lighting on certain transmission structures. These recommendations will be analyzed in the joint Supplemental EIS/EIR.

Following the public review period for the Draft Supplemental EIS/EIR the Forest Service and CPUC will issue a Final Supplemental EIS/EIR. The Forest Service will issue a ROD to document the decision to either approve or deny the changes to SCE's project. As the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Lead Agency for the project, the Forest Service will conduct a detailed review of the effects of the FAA recommendations on National Forest

System lands. Within the Angeles National Forest it is estimated that approximately 649 marker balls on 119 spans and 4 structures with aviation lights would impact Segments 6 and 11 to implement the FAA's recommendations. Two of the 4 structures recommended for aviation lights are on private lands within the Angeles National Forest, and are not subject to Forest Service jurisdiction or control.

The Forest Service is providing notice of this analysis so that interested and affected individuals are aware of how they may participate and contribute towards the final decision on the TRTP by the Forest Service. **Note:** Segment 8A undergrounding options are not the subject of this Notice of Intent.

DATES: The Draft Supplemental EIS/EIR is expected to be published in January 2013. A 45-day comment period will occur following publication of the Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**.

ADDRESSES: To request a copy of the Draft Supplemental EIS/SEIR or Final Supplemental EIS/EIR when it is available, or to obtain further information about the project, please write to the Angeles National Forest, c/o Aspen Environmental Group, 5020 Chesebro Road, Suite 200, Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Alternately, electronic comments may be sent to trtpsuppeir-eis@aspeneg.com. Electronic comments must be submitted as part of the actual email message, or as an attachment in plain text (.txt), Microsoft Word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), or portable document format (.pdf). Information about the Supplemental EIS/EIR and the environmental review process will be posted on the Internet at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/angeles/projects/>. This site will be used to post links to all public documents during the Supplemental EIS/EIR process.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lorraine Gerchas, Special Uses Coordinator, Forest Service, Angeles National Forest, 701 N. Santa Anita Ave., Arcadia, CA 91006, phone: (626) 574-5281. For additional information related to the project on non-National Forest System lands, contact Mary Jo Borak, California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), 505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102; phone: (415) 703-1333. All project-related documents are available on the Project Web site: ftp://ftp.cpuc.ca.gov/gopher-data/environ/tehachapi_renewables/TRTP.htm.

Responsible Official: The responsible official is Thomas Contreras, Forest Supervisor, Angeles National Forest,

701 North Santa Anita Avenue, Arcadia, California 91006.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Lead Agencies: The Forest Service is the Federal Lead Agency in accordance with 40 CFR 1501(b), and is responsible for the preparation of the Supplemental Draft EIS/EIR and Supplemental Final EIS/EIR.

Comments: Under NEPA regulations scoping is not required for supplements. As such, no NEPA scoping effort will occur as part of the Draft Supplemental EIS/EIR preparation process. No public scoping meetings will be held.

The Forest Service is not accepting public comment at this time, but the agency may be contacted with any questions, or requests for documents. The Draft Supplemental EIS/EIR will be made available for public comment. The comment period on the Draft Supplemental EIS/EIR is 45-days from the date the US Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**.

In the Final Supplemental EIS/EIR the Forest Service is required to respond to substantive comments received during the comment period for the Draft Supplemental EIS/EIR. The Forest Service is the NEPA Lead Agency and the responsible official is the Forest Supervisor, Angeles National Forest. The responsible official will decide whether and how to issue Special Use authorization for the modifications to the project or alternatives. The responsible official will also decide how to mitigate impacts of these actions and will determine when and how monitoring of effects will take place.

The TRTP Supplemental EIS/EIR decision and the reasons for the decision will be documented in the ROD. That decision will be subject to Forest Service Appeal Regulations (35 CFR part 215).

Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 22.

Dated: September 18, 2012.

Thomas A. Contreras,
Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

South Mississippi Electric Cooperative: Plant Ratcliffe, Kemper County Integrated Gasification Combined-Cycle (IGCC) Project

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of a Record of Decision.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has issued a Record of Decision (ROD) for the adoption of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed participation of South Mississippi Electric Power Association (SMEPA) in Plant Ratcliffe, an Integrated Gasification Combined-Cycle Facility located in Kemper County, Mississippi (the Project). The Acting Administrator of RUS has signed the ROD, which is effective on the publication of this notice. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Project in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The purpose of the EIS was to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the Project so that the DOE could assess potential cost-shared financing under the Clean Coal Power Initiative (CCPI) and issuance of a loan guarantee under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct05), and the USACE could consider potential issuance of permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The DOE/USACE Final EIS was issued in May 2010, and DOE issued their Record of Decision (ROD) in August 2010. RUS is considering providing a \$480 million loan guarantee to SMEPA that would provide for the acquisition of a 15% undivided ownership interest in the Project. RUS adopted the Final EIS pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (U.S.C. 4231 *et seq.*), and in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1794). RUS determined that the actions covered by the DOE/USACE Final EIS and RUS's proposed action were substantially the same, given that no new infrastructure would be required for SMEPA's participation (40 CFR 1506.3(b)). RUS conducted an independent evaluation of the DOE/USACE Final EIS, the associated Mitigation Action Plan (MAP) and Record of Decision (ROD), determined the documentation met the standards of an adequate statement (40 CFR 1506.3(a)), and adopted the documentation (Subpart H, 7 CFR Part 1794).

ADDRESSES: To obtain copies of the ROD, or for further information, please contact Ms. Emily Orler, Environmental Protection Specialist, at USDA, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence