

NOAA Fisheries and Environmental Protection Agency), state agencies (Washington Departments of Natural Resources, Governor's Office, Fish and Wildlife, and Ecology), the Tribes, the Washington State Association of Counties, the Washington Forest Protection Association, and the Washington Farm Forestry Association.

Following publication of the Forests and Fish Report, the Washington State Legislature directed the Forest Practices Board to adopt rules consistent with the Forest and Fish Report. The board conducted an evaluation of the proposal, and alternatives to the proposal, for modifying the Forest Practices Rules. This evaluation included a State Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), under the Washington State Environmental Policy Act. The State's Final SEIS, entitled "Alternatives for Forest Practices Rules for Aquatic and Riparian Resources" was published in April 2001.

In consideration of this evaluation, the Forest Practices Board adopted new rules in May 2001, which were based on the Forests and Fish Report. Effective July 2001, these new rules cover a wide variety of forest practices and include a new, more functional classification of rivers and streams on non-Federal forest land; improved plans for properly designing, maintaining, and upgrading existing and new forest roads; additional protections for unstable slopes; greater protections for riparian areas intended to maintain properly functioning conditions; a process for adaptive management; and other features.

Washington State has now entered into discussions with the Service's in anticipation of submitting an application for ESA take authorization pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Act, a 4(d) Limit or both for the Washington State Forest Practices Rules, regulating forest management activities on non-Federal forest lands in the state of Washington.

Review Under National Environmental Policy Act

The Services will conduct an environmental review of the application package(s) to be submitted by the State and prepare a Federal DEIS. The DEIS will analyze the proposal, as well as a full range of reasonable alternatives and the associated impacts of each. The Services are in the process of developing alternatives for analysis. Alternatives currently under consideration include: a No Action alternative; an alternative resulting in the issuance of a Section 10 Permit based on an HCP, which includes the

full complement of practices endorsed by the Forests and Fish Report; an alternative resulting in NOAA Fisheries determining that the State Forest Practices Rules and non-regulatory elements of the State's program are at least as protective of threatened fish as the Forests and Fish Report, thus qualifying the program under Limit 13 of the July, 2000 4(d) rule; an alternative that includes the adoption of a similar 4(d) rule by the FWS; and alternatives involving an ESA incidental take permit or 4(d) rules associated with measures that are either more or less protective than the complete Forests and Fish Report package. Additional alternatives may be developed based on input received from this and future public comment opportunities during the development of the DEIS.

Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties to ensure the full range of alternatives related to this proposed action and all significant issues are identified. The Services request that comments be as specific as possible. Comments should include information, issues, and concerns regarding: the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that implementation of the proposal could have on endangered and threatened species or their habitats; other possible alternatives; potential adaptive management and/or monitoring provisions; funding issues; baseline environmental conditions; other plans or projects that might be relevant to this project; and minimization and mitigation measures. In addition to considering impacts to threatened and endangered species and their habitats, the DEIS will analyze the effects the alternatives would cause to other components of the human environment. As a result comments specific to the following are also requested: air quality; water quality and quantity; geology and soils; cultural resources; social resources; economic resources; and environmental justice.

This notice is provided pursuant to NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.6). Comments or questions should be directed to the Services at the addresses or telephone numbers provided above. All comments and materials received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be released to the public.

This environmental review by the Services will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the NEPA, NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), other appropriate Federal laws and regulations, and policies and procedures of the Services for compliance with those regulations.

Dated: February 28, 2003.

Anne Badgley,

Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1, Portland, Oregon.

Dated: March 11, 2003.

Barbara Schroeder,

Acting Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

[981203295-3055-08]

RIN 0660-ZA06

Technology Opportunities Program

AGENCY: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of availability of funds.

SUMMARY: The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) issues this Notice describing the conditions under which applications will be received under the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) and how NTIA will select applications for funding.

As an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, NTIA is the Executive Branch's principal voice on domestic and international telecommunications and information technology issues. NTIA works to spur innovation, encourage competition, help create jobs and provide consumers with more choices and better quality telecommunications products and services at lower prices.

TOP supports this mission through funding demonstrations of new telecommunications and information applications for the provision of educational, cultural, health care, public information, public safety, or other social services.

DATES: Complete applications for the Fiscal Year 2003 TOP grant program must be either postmarked no later than April 23, 2003, or hand-delivered no later than 5 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time on April 23, 2003, to the respective addresses listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice. Applications submitted through guaranteed carrier services will be considered postmarked on the date they are submitted to the carrier.

Applications must show proof of mailing consisting of one of the following: