

West Fork Blacks Fork watershed. Sheep grazing would continue during the period of 7/6 to 9/15 each year under a four pasture deferred grazing system meeting the direction in the Wasatch-Cache Forest Plan. Following an agreement with the grazing permittee in 1999, half of the highest unit has been rested each year with an accompanying reduction in sheep months to compensate for the sheep months of forage not available for grazing in the rested portion. This change allows 1075 sheep to graze 7/6–9/15 under deferred rotation system with planned rest for the alpine area. Half of the alpine unit is rested each year and each half receives rest for two consecutive years. This agreement resulted in a reduction of 175 sheep* from what was allowed under the current West Fork Blacks Fork Allotment Management Plan.

The updated direction will be incorporated into the allotment management plan and the term grazing permit to guide grazing management within the allotment during the coming decade, or until amendments are warranted based on changed conditions or monitoring.

Possible Alternatives

In addition to the proposed action we have tentatively identified two alternatives:

—No Grazing Alternative: Eliminate permitted grazing on the West Fork-Blacks Fork Allotment except for one trail herd that uses the allotment as an access route to the Ashley National Forest.

—Eliminate Grazing on Unit 4 of the Grazing Allotment: Continue to graze sheep under a three pasture deferred grazing system meeting Forest Plan direction. This change allows 900 sheep to graze 7/6–9/15, a reduction of 300 sheep from the numbers allowed under the current West Fork Blacks Fork Allotment Management Plan

Responsible Official

Thomas L. Tidwell, Forest Supervisor, Wasatch-Cache National Forest, USDA Forest Service, 8236 Federal Building, 125 South State Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84138, is the Responsible Official for any decision to authorize grazing and manage rangelands on the allotment within the West Fork Blacks Fork watershed on National Forest system lands. He will document his decisions and rationale in a Record of Decision.

* The sheep numbers given are the number of mother sheep (ewes). These numbers assume that each ewe will be accompanied with her current year's offspring (lambs).

Nature of Decision To Be Made

Based upon the environmental analysis in the EIS the Forest Supervisor will decide whether or not to authorize sheep grazing on the West Fork Blacks Fork Allotment, and if so under what conditions.

Scoping Process

The public is encouraged to take part in the scoping process and is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments and assistance from Federal, State and local agencies and other individuals or organizations that may be interested in, or affected by, the proposed action. While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 30 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the Draft EIS. An informational meeting is scheduled for 1 pm on March 26, 2003 at the Uinta County Library, 701 Main, Evanston, Wyoming. Information from the informational meeting will be used in the preparation of the draft and final EIS.

Comment Requested

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review

A draft environmental impact statement which be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environment impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of a availability in the **Federal Register**.

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 45-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.

Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

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

Dated: March 19, 2003.

Thomas L. Tidwell,
Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Tehama County Resource Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Tehama County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will meet in Red Bluff, California. Agenda items to be covered include: (1) Introductions, (2) Approval of Minutes, (3) Public Comment, (4) Chairman Report, (5) Project Proposals/Possible Action, (6) Update on Approved Projects, (7) General Discussion, (8) Compliance Committee Report.