

DATES: Comments must be received in writing on or before July 11, 2003 to be assured of consideration. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: Comments concerning this notice should be addressed to the Director, Forest and Rangeland Management Staff, Mail Stop 1105, Forest Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20090-1105. Comments also may be submitted via facsimile to (202) 205-1045 or by e-mail to: fm/wo@fs.fed.us.

The public may inspect comments received at the Office of the Director of Forest and Rangelands Management, 201 14th Street, SW., Washington, DC. Callers are urged to call ahead to facilitate entrance into the buildings to (202) 205-0893.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rex Baumbach, Forest and Rangelands Management Staff, at (202) 205-0855.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Pursuant to statutory requirements at 16 U.S.C. 472a, the Secretary of Agriculture must advertise sales of all National Forest System timber or forest products exceeding \$10,000 in appraised value, unless (1) extraordinary conditions exist as defined by regulation; (2) select bidding methods ensure open and fair competition; (3) select bidding methods ensure that the Federal Government receives not less than appraised value of the timber or forest product; and (4) bidding patterns are monitored for evidence of unlawful bidding practices.

Pursuant to the Forest Service Small Business Timber Sale Set-Aside Program, development in cooperation with the Small Business Administration, Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 223.84 require that the Forest Service bid form used by potential timber sale bidders include provisions for small business concerns, such as (1) electing road construction by the Forest Service; (2) certifying as to their small business status; and (3) being informed of other road construction requirements in the bid and/or contract.

FS-2400-14-Bid for Advertised Timber and FS-2400-42a-National Forest Timber Sale implement the same statutes, policies, and regulations and collect similar information from the same applicant. The data gathered in this information collection is not available from other sources.

Description of Information Collection

1. *Title:* FS-2400-42a, National Forest Timber for Sale (Advertisement and Short-Form Bid).

OMB Number: 0596-0066.

Expiration Date of Approval: May 31, 2003.

Type of Request: Extension.

Abstract: The data collected are used by the agency to ensure that National Forest System timber is sold at not less than appraised value, that bidders meet specific criteria when submitting a bid, and that anti-trust violations do not occur during the bidding process.

Form FS-2400-42a-National Forest Timber for Sale is used to solicit and receive bids on short-notice timber sales advertised for less than 30 days and for less than \$10,000 in advertised value. Respondents are bidders on National Forest System timber sales. Forest Service sale officers mail bid forms to potential bidders, and bidders return the completed forms, dated and signed, to the Forest Service sale officer.

Before submitting a bid, bidders usually, but are not required to, inspect the sale area, review the requirements of the sample contract, and take other steps as may be reasonably necessary to ascertain the location, estimated volumes, and operating costs of the offered timber or forest product. Each bidder must include the following information: The price bid for the timber; the bidder's name, address, and signature; the bidder's tax identification number, certification that the bidder is not debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or voluntarily excluded from bidding on Government contracts; and that the bidder has not defaulted on any contracts within the last 3 years.

The tax identification number of each bidder is entered into an automated bid monitoring system, which is used to determine if speculative bidding or unlawful bidding practices are occurring. The tax identification number also is used to facilitate electronic payments to the purchaser. The data gathered in this information collection is not available from other sources.

Estimate of Burden: 130 minutes.

Type of Respondents: Individuals, large and small businesses, and corporations bidding on National Forest timber sales.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 5,000.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 3.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 32,505 hours.

2. *Title:* FS-2400-14, Bid For Advertised Timber.

OMB Number: 0596-0066.

Expiration Date of Approval: May 31, 2003.

Type of Request: Extension.

Abstract: The data collected will be used by the agency to ensure that National Forest System timber will be sold at not less than appraised value, that bidders will meet specific criteria when submitting a bid, and that anti-trust violations will not occur during the bidding process. This form will be used for soliciting and receiving bids on sales advertised for 30 days or longer and on sales greater than \$10,000 in advertised value.

Respondents will be bidders on National Forest System timber sales. Forest Service sale officers will mail bid forms to potential bidders, and bidders will return the completed forms, dated and signed, to the Forest Service sale officer. Before submitting the bid, the bidder usually will inspect the sale area, review the requirements of the sample contract, and take other steps as may be reasonably necessary to ascertain the location, estimated volumes, and operating costs of the offered timber or forest product.

Each bidder will have to include the following information: (1) The price bid for the timber; (2) the bidder's name, address, and signature; (3) the bidder's tax identification number; (4) the amount and type of the bid guarantee; (5) certification that the bidder has not paid a contingent fee to someone to obtain the contract for him or her, or retained any person or company to secure the contract; (6) certification that the bidder will meet the responsibility requirements at Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), § 223.101; (7) certification that the bidder will complete the consideration requirements of the contract; (8) certification that the bidder has not been debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or voluntarily excluded from conducting business with the government; (9) certification that the bidder has not been indicted or has not had a criminal or civil conviction within a 3-year period; (10) certification that the bidder has not defaulted on a public contract or agreement in the last 3 years; (11) information on whether the bidder has participated in a previous contract covered by section 202 of Executive Order 11246, Non-discrimination in Employment; (12) certification that the bidder has independently determined the bid price; (13) selection of the road construction option; (14) certification of a firm offer; (15) certification that the bidder has expressly adopted the terms of the bid and sample contract; (16) certification