

Need and Use of the Information: The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will collect information to monitor and reduce errors, develop policy strategies and analyze household characteristic data. In addition, FNS will use the data to determine sanctions and incentive based on error rate performance, and to estimate the impact of some program changes to FSP participation and costs by analyzing the available household characteristic data.

Description of Respondents: State, Local, or Tribal Government; Federal Government; Individuals or households.
Number of Respondents: 53.

Frequency of Responses:
 Recordkeeping; Reporting: Weekly; Monthly.

Total Burden Hours: 58,729.

Sondra A. Blakey,

*Departmental Information Collection
 Clearance Officer.*

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Lower Tucannon Ecosystem Maintenance Project, Umatilla National Forest, Columbia County, WA

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental effects of watershed restoration and ecosystem maintenance actions in the Little Tucannon sub-watershed of the Upper Tucannon watershed located on the Umatilla National Forest. The Lower Tucannon analysis area is located approximately 12 air miles southwest of Pomeroy, Washington. Proposed Actions include: landscape prescribed fire, commercial timber harvest, and native plant species re-vegetation to promote and improve ecosystem sustainability, reducing fuels to historic levels in dry forest types, through mechanical methods and prescribed fire; move dry and moist forest types, in the analysis area, closer to historic vegetative stocking levels and species composition; and conduct road obliteration, road reconstruction, and construction of temporary roads. The Proposed Actions are being considered together because they represent either connected or cumulative actions. This EIS will be consistent with the 1990 Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest

Plan) for the, which provides overall guidance for forest management of the area. All activities associated with this proposal will be designed for maintenance or improvement of the forest ecosystems, watersheds, vegetation, wildlife, and fisheries resources.

DATES: Written comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by August 30, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments and suggestions to Monte Fujishin, District Ranger, Pomeroy Ranger District, 71 West Main, Pomeroy, Washington 99347.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
 Randall Walker, Project Team Leader,
 Pomeroy Ranger District. Phone: (509)
 843-1891.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The project area contains approximately 16,300 acres within the Umatilla National Forest in Columbia County, Washington. It encompasses an area of the Upper Tucannon watershed from San Sousi Spring along the Little Tucannon and Tucannon Rivers north to the National Forest Boundary. Legal description is as follows: portions of Sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, and 14 of Township 8 North, Range 40 East; Sections 5 and 6 of Township 8 North, Range 41 East; Sections 24, 25, 26, 35, and 36 of Township 9 North, Range 40 East; Sections 2, 3, 4, 9-24, and 26-35 of Township 9 North, Range 41 East, W.M. surveyed. All proposed activities are outside the boundaries of any wilderness area. Approximately 7,360 acres of the analysis area are within Inventoried Roadless Areas (Willow Springs (6,100 acres) and Meadows Creek (1,250 acres)).

Purpose and Need for Action. Findings from the Tucannon Watershed Assessment identify that past fire suppression activities, selective harvest, and recent drought conditions have contributed to the ongoing degradation of forest ecosystem sustainability in the watershed. These past activities and climate conditions have transformed the ecosystem processes and altered stand structure, tree species composition, and the tree stocking levels of forest stands in the watershed to non-historic levels, and have directly contributed to increased fuel loading. The purpose of this project is to develop and analyze a combination of actions that best responds to the recommendations of the responsible official and the findings of the Tucannon Watershed Assessment. The need for prompt action emphasizes implementation of ecosystem management projects to promote

healthy watershed conditions. To promote ecosystem based management there is a need to provide direction to encourage and sustain long-term vegetation enhancement, wildlife habitat improvements, long-term recreation use planning, and the maintenance and/or improvement of sustainable fish and wildlife habitat.

Propose Action. The Proposed Action will be consistent with the Forest Plan, as amended, which provides goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for the various activities and land allocations on the forest. The following acres of various land allocations located within the analysis area will be affected: A3-Viewshed 1 (54 acres); A6-Developed Recreation (7 acres); C1-Dedicated Old Growth (508 acres); C3-Big Game Winter Range (8,847 acres); C4-Wildlife Habitat (4,256 acres); C5-Riparian and Wildlife (523 acres); C8-Grass-Tree Mosaic (1,280 acres); and E2-Timber and Big Game (775 acres). The total analysis area is 16,251 acres. Timber management (harvest) for the project is only proposed in management area C3, C4, and E2. Fuels treatment for this project are proposed in all management allocations. The Forest Service proposes to reduce conifer stocking levels on approximately 10,000 acres of forested land (5,000 acres of which are within roadless) by removing diseased, overstocked, or high risk trees through manual thinning and prescribed burning. Approximately 4,500 (no acres within roadless) of the above 10,000 acres may be commercial thinned, yielding approximately 20 million board feet of timber. Approximately one half of these commercial acres would require helicopter yarding. Less than two miles of temporary road construction would be needed to access timber harvest areas. All temporary roads would be obliterated following completion of sale activities. No road construction or reconstruction is being proposed within the roadless areas. An additional 3.5 miles of existing roads that are no longer in use could be obliterated by natural or mechanical methods. The obliteration method used would be based on site-specific conditions. Some of the proposed road to be obliterated is located within the roadless areas. An estimated 17.5 miles of road resurfacing/reconstruction would be needed to haul timber and accomplish other treatments. This proposal also includes prescribed burning of 4,500 acres within harvest units and 5,500 acres of forested land outside of harvest units. Approximately 5,000 acres of non-forested grasslands are also proposed for prescribed burning.