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APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Ron A. Sequeira, Center for Plant Health Organizations and Technology, PPQ, APHIS, 1017 Main Campus Drive, Suite 2500, Raleigh, NC 27606-5202; (919) 513-2663.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **Background**

On June 16, 2003, we published in the **Federal Register** (68 FR 35619, Docket No. 03-022-1) a notice advising the public that a draft pest risk analysis has been prepared by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relative to a proposed rule currently under consideration that would allow the importation of Hass avocados from Mexico into the entire United States and during all months of the year. In that notice, we stated that we were making the draft pest risk analysis available to the public for review and comment.

Comments on the draft pest risk analysis were required to be received on or before August 15, 2003. We are extending the comment period until September 15, 2003. This action will allow interested persons additional time to prepare and submit comments.

**Authority:** 7 U.S.C. 450 and 7701-7772; 21 U.S.C. 136 and 136a; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.3.

Done in Washington, DC, this 11th day of August 2003.

**Kevin Shea,**

*Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.*

[FR Doc. 03-20732 Filed 8-13-03; 8:45 am]

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## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

### **Forest Service**

#### **Iron Ecosystem Restoration Project, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, Kittitas County, Washington State**

**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 reduce the risk of wildfire in the Iron Ecosystem planning area due to the buildup of both aerial and ground fuels. Approximately 12,000 acres will be analyzed with treatment expected on 3,000 to 3,500 acres within the Swauk Late Successional Reserve (LSR). Much of the area is in Condition Class III and IV fuels types, which are greater than three to four times the natural range of fire occurrence in the area. The possibility of catastrophic wildfire exists through ignitions caused both by natural sources and increased traffic on U.S. Route 97 and forest roads.

The Forest Service proposes to thin these stands from below to restore forest health and resistance to stand replacing wildfire, and to better protect late successional refugia. Protection of refugia would be achieved by breaking up contiguous, heavy fuel loading across the Swauk landscape, focusing on dry sites and sites at risk above the point of historical fire starts. Techniques such as thinning from below (pre-commercial and commercial), mechanical treatments, under burning, piling, top yarding, mulching, and fuel wood sales are proposed as tools reduce heavy fuel loading. Re-introduction of prescribed fire after initial treatments are completed is also proposed. The planning area is located approximately 15 miles northeast of Cle Elum, Washington. The agency has given notice of the full environmental analysis and decision-making process that will occur on the proposal so that interested and affected people may become aware of how they can participate in the process and contribute to the final decision.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by September 30, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to the Cle Elum Ranger District, Attn: Floyd Rogalski, Natural Resource Planner, 803 West Second Street, Cle Elum, Washington 98922.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Floyd Rogalski, Natural Resource Planner Cle-Elum Ranger District, 803 West Second Street, Cle Elum, Washington 98922, (509) 674-4411.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This environmental impact statement (EIS) will analyze an areas for possible treatments designed to improve forest health while providing forest structure for wildlife habitat, such as the Northern Spotted Owl, and protecting other resource values. Risk of Wildfire has increased in the planning area due to the buildup of both aerial and ground

fuels, exclusion of fire, and past harvest activities. These past treatment have reduced the presence of health, vigorous growing trees, while increasing the risk of stand replacement fire within an LSR. The possibility of wildfire ignition exists with increased recreational use and vehicle traffic on U.S. Highway 97 and lateral roads.

**Purpose and Need for Action.** Past timber harvest treatments removed many of the early seral species, leaving more shade tolerant species such as grand and Douglas-fir. Root diseases are widespread within the planning area with grand fir being the most prone and currently showing high mortality as a result. Douglas-fir mistletoe is also widespread within this area, affecting the vigor of the stands and making them more susceptible to insect attacks. Past harvest treatments also removed a majority of the dominant overstory trees, changing stocking and distribution levels, thus increasing the probability of stand replacement fire.

The primary purpose of the Iron Ecosystem Restoration Project is to implement the National Fire Plan, (January 2002) and Healthy Forest Initiative (August 2002) in the planning area. Protection of values at risk within the Swauk LSR is ultimately of the highest importance. Values at risk in the planning area include habitat for threatened and endangered species, late-successional habitat, wildland urban interface, aquatic habitat values, water quality, science values, and long-term forest stability and forest health. A strategic landscape plan would be developed and implemented for silviculturally treating heavily stocked stands for long-term stability and growth of fire resistant overstory trees, for protection of the highest quality spotted owl habitat from stand replacement fire, and for protection of current and planned home sites on private land in the Wildland Urban interface.

**Proposed Action.** The proposed action is to treat stands within the project area to reduce potential fire spread in the event of an ignition and to improve forest health, while continuing to provide forest structure for wildlife habitat and other resources. The Forest Service would focus treatment on those stands with greater tree densities and higher fuel loadings, considering their location on the landscape in terms of aspect and slope, and the projected benefits of manipulation in these stands to enhance suppression efforts. There have been 95 units identified that involve stands that contain a variety of mixed conifer and dry-site pine forest.