

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Chugach National Forest, Resurrection Creek Stream and Riparian Restoration Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, notice is hereby given that the Forest Service, Chugach National Forest will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement to disclose the environmental consequences of the proposed Resurrection Creek Stream and Riparian Restoration Project which encompasses approximately 120 acres of National Forest System Land (NFS) and approximately 18 acres of adjacent private lands. Historic placer mining operations have affected Resurrection Creek by straightening and simplifying the stream, and separating it from its floodplain. These impacts have degraded fish rearing and spawning habitat on Resurrection Creek, as well as adjacent wildlife riparian habitat for species such as bears and eagles. Natural recovery from mining impacts has been minimal on this segment of Resurrection Creek. The proposed project would greatly accelerate the recovery of riparian areas, and fish and wildlife habitat on Resurrection Creek. In order to move towards the desired future condition as described in the Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as well as meet the purpose and need of the project proposal to restore Resurrection Creek's channel, floodplain and streamside vegetation to pre-mining conditions and enhance fish and riparian wildlife habitat, proposed activities include: (1) Providing access for heavy equipment, which might include a temporary bridge or stream

crossing over Resurrection Creek and Palmer Creek; (2) mechanical manipulation and grading of up to 140,000 cubic yards of mine tailings to recover floodplain width and elevations; (3) excavation of a meandering river channel and adjacent side channels, including the development of a channel instream pools and spawning habitat; (4) harvesting up to 5,000 trees, with and without root wads, for use on the new river channel and floodplain. Trees would be taken primarily from the project area. If constraints to harvest at the project area are too high, additional off-site harvest in areas that have gone through a separate NEPA analysis might be needed; (5) replacing soils and organics stripped away during historic placer mining operations Soil enhancement would improve growing conditions for native plant communities in constructed floodplains and riparian areas. Soil and sod would likely be gathered from source areas both within and outside the project area; (6) thinning existing overstocked riparian sapling spruce and cottonwood stands adjacent to Resurrection Creek; (7) re-vegetation of native plant species on constructed floodplains and riparian areas. Natural re-vegetation (without planting) would be used where seed sources and site conditions are favorable. Where such conditions are lacking, the site would be planted; and (8) stockpiling excess tailings could occur within the project area or off-site.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received within 30 days of publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. The draft environmental impact statement is expected to be available for public review in January 2004 and the final environmental impact statement is expected to be available in May 2004.

ADDRESSES: Submit written, oral, or email comments by: (1) Mail—Resurrection Creek Restoration Project, Dave Blanchet, 3301 C Street, Suite 300, Anchorage, Alaska, Zip Code 99503–3998. (2) phone—(907) 743–9538; (3) e-mail—dblanket@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dave Blanchet at (907) 743–9538.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose and need for action of the Resurrection Creek Stream and Riparian Restoration Project is to

accelerate the recovery of riparian areas, and fish and wildlife habitat on a 0.8 mile segment of Resurrection Creek. Natural recovery from mining impacts has been minimal on this segment of Resurrection Creek. Historic placer mining operations have affected Resurrection Creek by straightening and simplifying the stream, and separating it from its floodplain. These impacts have degraded fish rearing and spawning habitat on Resurrection Creek, as well as adjacent wildlife riparian habitat for species such as bears and eagles. Natural recovery from mining impacts has been minimal on this segment of Resurrection Creek. The proposed project would greatly accelerate the recovery of riparian areas, and fish and wildlife habitat on Resurrection Creek. There is a need to examine a portion of the creek immediately downstream of the project area on private land within the Haun Trust lands. Additional restoration activities may be implemented on the Haun Trust lands in lieu of gaining access to the project area through this site.

Proposed Action

The proposed actions to meet the purpose and need include: (1) Providing access for heavy equipment, which might include a temporary bridge or stream crossing over Resurrection Creek and Palmer Creek; (2) mechanical manipulation and grading of up to 140,000 cubic yards of mine tailings to recover floodplain width and elevations; (3) excavation of a meandering river channel and adjacent side channels, including the development of a channel with instream pools and spawning habitat; (4) harvesting up to 5,000 trees, with and without root wads, for use on the new river channel and floodplain. Trees would be taken primarily from the project area. If constraints to harvest at the project area are high, additional off-site harvest in areas that have gone through a separate NEPA analysis might be needed; (5) replacing soils and organics stripped away during historic placer mining operations. Soil enhancement would improve growing conditions for native plant communities in constructed floodplains and riparian areas. Soil and sod would likely be gathered from source areas both within and outside the project area; (6) thinning existing overstocked riparian sapling spruce and cottonwood stands