

are also available for review in our reading room (information on the location and hours of the reading room is listed under the heading **ADDRESSES** at the beginning of this notice).

The EA and FONSI have been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 17th day of October, 2003.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 03–26785 Filed 10–22–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Chloride Bush Project, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Bonner County, Idaho

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 document and disclose the potential environmental effects of proposed activities within the Gold Creek watershed on the Sandpoint Ranger District, Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The watershed is located about 25 miles south of Sandpoint, Idaho, near the town of Lakeview.

The proposal was designed using science from broad scale assessments including the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. The proposal is intended to improve the health and productivity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, and provide for human uses and values by: (1) Reducing road densities and sediment risks from roads and trails, (2) restoring desired forest cover, structure, pattern and species composition across the landscape where they are outside natural or accepted ranges, (3) maintaining or improving stands where desired species are being crowded out, or are declining from competition, (4) promoting the long-term persistence and stability of wildlife habitat diversity, (5) reducing the level of forest fuels and the risk of catastrophic wildfire, (6) providing motorized recreation

opportunities while protecting resource values such as wildlife and water, and (7) producing timber as a byproduct of ecosystem restoration and maintenance.

Activities would include: (1) Selective cutting where opportunities exist to maintain or improve stands where desired species are being crowded out, or are declining from competition, (2) regenerating stands where widespread mortality is being caused by insects and disease and replanting them with longer lived seral species, (3) burning to reduce fuels, improve growing conditions, and improve forage for wildlife, (4) constructing several temporary spur roads to facilitate vegetation management activities, (5) decommissioning unneeded road segments, (6) placing a system road into storage, (7) converting two existing roads to motorized trails, and (8) improving Trail #113 in the Packsaddle Inventoried Roadless Area.

The Sandpoint Ranger District of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests in Bonner County, Idaho will administer these activities. The EIS will tier to the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Plan (September 1987).

DATES: Comments should be postmarked within 30 days after publication of this notice. Please include your name and address and the name of the project you are commenting on.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments and suggestions on the proposed management activities or request to be placed on the project mailing list by writing to: Chloride Bush Project, Attn: A.J. Helgenberg, Sandpoint Ranger District, 1500 Hwy 2, Suite 110, Sandpoint, ID 83864.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: A.J. Helgenberg, Project Team Leader, Sandpoint Ranger District at 208–265–6643 or by e-mail at ajhelgenberg@fs.fed.us.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR parts 215 or 217. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. For persons requesting such confidentiality; it may be granted in only very limited circumstances,

such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 10 days.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: More information about the Chloride Bush Project can be found on the Internet at www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/eco/manage/nepa/index.html. The legal description for the project area includes all or portions of sections 1–3, 10–16, 20–29, and 34–36 in Township 53 North; Range 1 West and section 18 in Township 53 North; Range 1 East.

The Forest Service will be preparing an environmental impact statement for the following proposed activities and alternative courses of action based on public comments. To improve the health of aquatic habitats, 10.4 miles of existing classified roads would be decommissioned, 7.1 miles of overgrown, undrivable roads would be taken off transportation system maps, 5.0 miles of road would be placed into storage and 4.8 miles of road would be upgraded. To achieve vegetation management objectives, helicopter and road-based logging systems, prescribed burning and reforestation would be used. Additionally, several short logging spurs totaling 1.8 miles would be constructed to access stands for treatment using road-based logging systems. Of the 9,413 acres in the project area, 860 acres would be selectively cut, and 1,637 acres would be regenerated. Prescribed fire would be used on regenerated areas, selectively cut dry sites (423 acres), and to maintain old growth ponderosa pine stands and shrub fields (145 acres). Regenerated areas would be reforested with larch, white pine and ponderosa pine seedlings. Motorized recreation opportunities would be managed by converting 3.3 miles of road to motorized trail, and upgrading 5.0 miles of an existing motorized trail. Preliminary issues identified relate to the effects of roads and road construction on sediment, water yield, fish habitat, noxious weed spread, motorized access, and wildlife security, the effects of logging and creating openings on water yield, fish and wildlife habitat and wildlife security, and the effects of road decommissioning on private land access and ability to manage forest vegetation. Current alternatives consist of the proposed action and no action.