

the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

Executive Order 13212, May 18, 2001 is intended to improve the internal management of the federal government in dealing with processing energy-related projects in a timely manner to aid the flow of domestic mineral production. The Forest Plan, as noted previously, identifies standards and guidelines, some of which are applicable to minerals activities. The Daniel Boone National Forest is presently preparing a revision to the Forest Plan that will be accompanied by its own EIS. However, 42 United States Code (USC) Section 885 does not permit the Secretary of Agriculture to delay processing of lease applications pending the completion of the revised Forest Plan. The current Forest Plan guides management of this national forest until the revised plan is completed and the administrative appeal process has ended. The Forest Service is publishing this Notice of Intent pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality implementing regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1501.7.

Date Comments Are Due: Comments concerning the scope of this planning project and responses to the Call for Coal and Other Resource Information must be received by March 15, 2003. The Draft LRMP Amendment and EIS is expected to be completed in May 2003 and the Final LRMP Amendment and EIS is expected to be completed in September 2003.

Send Comments to: Submit written comments to Corey Miller, Daniel Boone National Forest, 1700 Bypass Road, Winchester, KY 40391. Comments may also be sent by fax at (859) 744-1568; or by electronically to cmiller09@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Corey Miller is the Interdisciplinary Team Leader for this proposed action. He can be reached by US mail at the Daniel Boone National Forest, 1700 Bypass Road, Winchester, KY 40391; by phone at (859) 745-3149; or by e-mail at cmiller09@fs.fed.us.

Lead and Cooperating Agencies: The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Daniel Boone National Forest is the lead agency. There will be two cooperating agencies associated with this project—U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI) Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Jackson Field Office, Jackson, MS and the USDI Office of Surface Mining (OSM), Lexington, KY.

Responsible Officials: The Forest Supervisor is the responsible official from the Forest Service for this project.

The District Manager—Jackson Field Office is the responsible official from the BLM for this project. The Field Office Director—Lexington, Kentucky is the responsible OSM official for this project.

Decision To Be Made: The responsible official for the Daniel Boone National Forest will determine if the leasing of federal coal tracts underlying these National Forest System lands will occur after the LRMP Amendment and EIS in prepared and what stipulations should be applied if a lease are issued.

The Bureau of Land Management has the responsibility to address coal lease applications (coal lease sales) on federal mineral reserves. In consultation with the USFS, the responsible official for the BLM will decide whether or not to offer the tracts for competitive leasing, and under what terms, conditions and stipulations.

The Office of Surface Mining will be responsible for providing recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior regarding approval, disapproval, or conditional approval of the mine plan on lands contained within the federal lease area. If it is determined that there may be surface impacts resulting from mining in the proposed lease area, the Office of Surface Mining, with input from the U.S. Forest Service, will also be responsible for providing recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior concerning the issuance of findings as to whether or not the proposed lease and mining areas contain significant recreational, timber, economic or other values that may be incompatible with the proposed mining activities.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for the Proposal: The purpose and need for the EIS is to determine if federal coal will be leased in response to the lease application submitted for this federal coal. Private coal leases, permitted by the state, surround the proposed federal coal lease tracts. The leasing of this coal would allow for the development of the private and federal coal resources in an economic and efficient manner and would maximize the recovery of the coal.

Scoping Process: Scoping is the process used to determine the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to this project. Public involvement is an integral component of coping. The public will be contacted in several different ways, provided information about this project, and given an opportunity to provide input on it. Information will be sent to a mailing list

of individuals, groups, and agencies that are known to have an interest in this project or have previously expressed an interest in projects of this nature or general activities in the project area.

In addition to the publication of this Notice of Intent, legal notices will be published in the Lexington (KY) Herald-Leader and the Manchester (KY) Times.

A Public coping open house meeting will be held at the Leslie County Extension Office at 22045 Main Street in Hyden, KY on March 10, 2003 from 6 PM to 9 PM.

Additional hearings pursuant to Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 1610.2 and 43 CFR 3425.4, will be announced through the **Federal Register**, local news media and web sites at least 15 days prior to the event.

Preliminary Issues: Preliminary issues of concern include subsidence, and changes in the local hydrologic regime and water quality. The potential for surface and ground water resource impacts will be studied in the EIS.

Preliminary Alternatives: The proposed development of the federal coal reserve tracts involves an economic and efficient method of mining the resource. Other preliminary alternatives include the No Action alternative, which is a rejection of the Proposed Action to mine the federal coal. The adjoining private coal resource leases that surround the three federal tracts have been permitted, and the coal underlying those leases would be mined at a reduced level.

Permits or Licenses Required: A permit is required from the State Department of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement prior to any development of coal resources.

Unsuitability Criteria: The information addressing the Unsuitability Criteria is listed in 43 CFR 3461. Application of the unsuitability criteria will result in a preliminary review of Daniel Boone National Forest lands for leasing. The determination relates only to the specific resources and uses addressed in the 20 unsuitability criteria. Section 43 CFR 3461.1 provides for an exemption in the application of the unsuitability criteria. However, in this case the exemption isn't met, because of the surface impacts resulting from subsidence from underground mines. The unsuitability criteria will be addressed in the EIS.

Lands within the project area, which are acceptable for further leasing consideration after application of the unsuitability criteria will then be addressed in regards to other resource values and uses that could be affected by lease issuance.