

Public participation is an important part of the analysis, commencing with the initial scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7), which will occur in the period February/March 1995. In addition, the public is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. A public meeting will be held late February or early March 1995 in Troy, Montana.

Comments from the public and other agencies will be used in preparation of the Draft EIS. The scoping process will be used to:

1. Identify potential issues.
2. Identify major issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Eliminate minor issues or those which have been covered by a relevant previous environmental analysis, such as the Kootenai Forest Plan EIS.
4. Identify alternatives to the proposed action.
5. Identify potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect, and cumulative effects).
6. Determine potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

Some public comments have already been received. The following preliminary issues have been identified so far:

1. How may proposed road reconstruction and subdivision of the private land affect the water quality in Bull Lake?
2. How will the proposed road construction and subdivision affect threatened, endangered and sensitive species in the area?
3. How may the proposed road construction affect big game winter range use?

Other issues commonly associated with such activities include: effects on cultural resources, soils, old growth, and scenery values. This list may be verified, expanded, or modified based on public scoping for this proposal.

The Draft EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and available for public review in September of 1995. At that time, the EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the Draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the EPA's notice of availability appears in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in

management of this area participate at that time. To be most helpful, comments on the Draft EIS should be as site-specific as possible. The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed by January 1996.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45-day scoping comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in developing issues and alternatives.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

I have the final authority for issuing a decision regarding this proposal. I have delegated the responsibility of preparing the EIS to Three Rivers District Ranger, Michael Balboni. My address is Kootenai National Forest, 506 U.S. Hwy 2 West, Libby, MT 59923.

Dated: January 27, 1995.

**Robert L. Schrenk**,  
Forest Supervisor.

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#### **Skyline Ridge EIS, Kootenai National Forest, Lincoln County, Montana**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice; intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The USDA, Forest Service, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental effects associated with fire recovery activities in the areas of four 1994 wildfires, including Pulpit, Studebaker, Gunsight, and Seventeenmile fires. The project area is located in the Seventeenmile, O'Brien, and Lower Yaak Physiographic Areas of the Three Rivers Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest, Lincoln County, Montana. Part of the proposed project's activities lie within Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA's).

The Forest Service proposes to salvage timber, construct and reconstruct roads, reduce fuel concentrations, revegetate with trees, native shrubs, and grass, and obliterate roads. These activities are being considered together because they represent either connected or cumulative actions as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.25). The purposes of the proposed action's activities are to harvest fire killed timber in a timely manner, manage the road systems, reduce future potential for catastrophic fire, sustain timber productivity, improve wildlife and riparian habitat, specifically for threatened, endangered, or sensitive (TES) species, and accelerate watershed recovery. An amendment to the Kootenai Forest Plan is also part of this proposal.

Overall guidance of land management activities on the Kootenai National Forest, including timber harvest and road management, are regulated by the Kootenai National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) (September, 1987). In addition we considered more recent scientific thinking on the functioning of forest ecosystems (Ecosystems Management). Based on this analysis we developed a proposed action that does not meet Forest Plan standards. Specifically we proposed timber harvest in management Area 2, roadless recreation.

**DATE:** Written comments and suggestions should be received on or before March 6, 1995.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit written comments and suggestions on the proposed management activities or a request to be placed on the project mailing list to Michael L. Balboni, District Ranger, Three Rivers Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest, 1437 North Hwy 2, Troy, Montana 59935.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Steve Prieve, EIS Team Leader, Three Rivers Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest, Phone (406) 295-4693.