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

South Fork Yaak EIS; Kootenai National Forest; Lincoln County, Montana

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA. **ACTION:** Notice; intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of a Proposed Action in the South Fork Yaak Physiographic Area located about 24 air miles northeast of Troy, Montana. This EIS will tier to the Kootenai National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and EIS, which provide overall guidance for achieving the desired forest condition of the area.

The Proposed Action was developed in response to the major fire events that burned over 3,000 acres in the Pink Mt. and Fowler Creek areas in August 1994. The proposal is to salvage timber, construct and reconstruct roads, reduce fuel concentrations, improve riparian and wildlife habitat, reforest timber stands, and improve wildlife security. These are being considered together because they represent either connected or cumulative actions as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.25). Part of the proposed project's activities lie within an Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA), Zulu #166.

The Proposed Action was developed using various principles of Ecosystem Management. In doing so, the post-fire conditions were characterized at a broad scale with consideration to natural processes that historically shaped this ecosystem. A Forest Plan exception to certain Management Area standards may be needed to implement this alternative.

DATES: Writen comments should be received on or before March 9, 1995.

ADDRESSES: The Responsible Official is Robert L. Schrenk, Forest Supervisor, Kootenai National Forest. Send 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 Highway 2, Troy, Montana, 59935.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jack Zearfoss, South Fork Yaak EIS Team Leader, Three Rivers Ranger District (406) 295–4693.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The timber salvage activities under consideration would occur within the 45.197 acre South Fork Yaak Physiographic Area. The specific areas considered are the Fowler Creek, Zulu Creek, and Clay Mt. areas. Primary salvage activities would occur in two specific fire-affected areas: the Fowler Fire (2,589 acres) and the Pink Mt. Fire (475 acres). Previous planning efforts (Zulu Smoot Environmental Impact Statement) have identified other salvage opportunities outside of the fire-affected areas which are included in this Proposed Action.

The project area lies within all or portions of T35N, R31W, Sections 10, 11, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 33, and 34, T34N, R31W, Sections 3 and 4, T35N, R32W, Sections 36, T34N, R32W, Sections 1, and 12 and Sections 6, and 7 T43N, R31W, PMM, Lincoln County, Montana.

The Proposed Action would harvest about 16.2 million board feet. Ninetyseven percent of this would be dead or high-risk trees. Three percent would be live trees. Conventional cable and ground-based logging systems would be utilized for harvest operations. This would occur from 33 harvest units totalling 1156 acres. Fuel reduction accomplished in conjunction with harvest includes grapple piling and prescribed burning. Reforestation is proposed on approximately 1383 acres of which 227 are burned plantations. Approximately 3.51 miles of new road would be constructed and 6.99 miles of existing road would be reconstructed. Road maintenance would occur on about 25.61 miles of existing road. Planting for wildlife forage would occur on 94 acres. Revegetation in riparian

areas would occur on 35 acres. Placement of large woody debris would occur along 5.0 miles of stream channel. Existing roads would be rehabilitated through a variety of methods including the removal of approximately 25 instream culverts, recontouring of 3.44 miles of road, ripping and seeding of 22.65 miles of road and seeding of 3.12 miles of road.

Approximately 218 acres proposed for harvest lie within the Zulu #166 IRA. Approximately 1.41 miles of road construction would occur within the area.

The primary purposes of the Proposed Action are:

- (1) To revegetate the fire-affected areas as quickly as possible
- (2) To reduce the potential for future high intensity wildfires
- (3) To salvage fire and insect killed trees
- (4) To contribute to the supply of timber to local mills
- (5) To facilitate watershed recovery (6) To accelerate the recovery of som
- (6) To accelerate the recovery of some wildlife habitat.

The purpose of road construction and reconstruction is to facilitate access to the areas to be harvested and treated.

The decision to be made is, what action (if any) should be taken in the South Fork Yaak Physiographic Area to:

- (1) Recover the fire affected areas using Ecosystem Management principles
- (2) Provide goods and services to the local economy and U.S. citizens
- (3) Reduce the risk for high-intensity wildfire in the future
- (4) Develop and manage the road system to facilitate the removal of timber, post harvest treatments, reduce sedimentation, restore stream channel equilibrium, and maintain or improve wildlife habitat.

The Kootenai Forest Plan provides guidance for management activities within the potentially affected area through its goals, objectives, standards and guidelines, and management area direction. The areas of proposed activities would occur within Management Areas 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 and 19. Timber harvest would occur in all Management Areas. Road construction would occur in Management Areas 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17. Below is a brief description of the applicable management direction.

Management Area 12.—These are areas that contain productive timber