Dated: January 31, 1995. David F. Alexander, Forest Supervisor. [FR Doc. 95–2916 Filed 2–6–95; 8:45 am] BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project, Payette National Forest, Idaho

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

SUMMARY: In the summer and fall of 1994. the Chicken Fire covered 103.000 acres of Payette National Forest northeast of McCall, Idaho. The Forest Service intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for a portion of the wildfire area to assess and disclose the environmental effects of a proposal. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to remove fire-killed and imminently dead timber, recover its economic value and meet socioeconomic demands of local communities, reforest the area, retain and enhance wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion and decrease sedimentation, improve fish habitat, and provide recreation access.

All actions include provisions for snags, dead and down woody debris, visual quality, cultural resources, TES species, and wild and scenic river study corridors, and would comply with the Bull Trout Conservation Agreement and PACFISH guidelines for water quality and fisheries.

This project would be accomplished through a salvage sale of burned timber on about 4,850 acres, using helicopter logging (no road construction); planting of conifer seedlings; repairing and improving drainage conditions on seven existing roads; converting a road to a trail; and constructing nest platforms for great gray owls. The salvage sale proceeds would help finance the other activities.

The project lies 25–40 miles northeast of McCall, in the lower South Fork Salmon River watershed, in the Smith Creek, Pony Creek, and Elk Creek drainages. It lies partly within the Secesh and Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak Roadless Areas.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Fred Dauber, Krassel District Ranger (208 634–0600); or Dan Anderson, Interdisciplinary Team Leader (208 634–0631).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: From July to October 1994, wildfires covered a total of about 290,000 acres of Payette National Forest. The Chicken Fire was ignited in mid-August by several

lightning strikes east of the town of Warren near the South Fork Salmon River, and eventually covered about 103,000 acres until stopped by winter weather in mid-October. Within this perimeter, it burned in a mosaic pattern of fire intensities including some unburned areas.

In October, Payette National Forest convened three interdisciplinary groups of Forest resources specialists to assess the landscapes affected by the fires: one each for the Blackwell landscape, the Corral landscape, and the Chicken landscape. Each landscape was composed of two or more watersheds. The Chicken landscape encompassed nearly 180,000 acres in the Lower South Fork and Elk Creek watersheds. The Forest also convened a team to assess the broad-scale area, which encompasses the three landscapes plus the Thunderbolt landscape to the south.

In January 1995, each landscape team produced a landscape assessment encompassing their fire area. The teams used an ecosystem-based approach to assess the fires' effects and to propose target landscape conditions, based on the Forest Plan and the historic range of variation. Each team identified management opportunities that could be implemented this year and in the future to move their respective postfire landscape toward the target landscape design. The Forest leadership team selected a package of proposed actions for each landscape to bring forward into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process.

The Proposed Action for the Lower South Fork Salmon River described herein is one product of the Chicken landscape assessment: it proposes the high-priority short term projects related to timber salvage and other postfire resources opportunities consistent with the target landscape design for the Chicken Landscape.

Burn intensities, as defined by degree of tree mortality, in the Chicken landscape varied from intensely burned to unburned. Within the Chicken landscape, which includes a portion of the Chicken Fire, approximately 36,900 acres burned at high intensity (tree mortality greater than 90%), 23,700 acres at moderate intensity (tree mortality greater than 30% and less than 90%), and 28,200 acres at low intensity (tree mortality less than 30%). The remainder of the landscape did not burn.

An estimated 83,300 acres of the Secesh Roadless Area and 30,900 acres of the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak Roadless Area lie within the Chicken landscape, of which about 34,500 acres and 21,000 acres were burned, respectively.

The primary management emphasis in the South Fork Salmon River drainage is restoration of harvestable, robust, selfsustaining populations of naturally reproducing salmon and trout. The South Fork Salmon River was the single largest producer of summer chinook salmon in the Columbia River Basin by the 1950's. Since then this run has continued to decline significantly, partially due to habitat degradation caused by management-induced sediment. The Snake River spring/ summer and fall chinook salmon are now listed as endangered species. The South Fork's steelhead, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout are listed by the Forest Service as sensitive. Some spawning areas and major winter habitats for both endangered and sensitive fishes are influenced by the project area. Numerous road-related sediment sources continue to deliver sediment to the South Fork and tributaries, adversely affecting fish habitat.

Simultaneous with this Notice of Intent, Payette National Forest is also publishing two Notices of Intent for other postfire proposals. The "Fall Creek Postfire Project" EIS will cover part of the Blackwell landscape, and the "Main Salmon River Postfire Project" EIS will cover the Corral landscape. The Forest Service will analyze the two projects concurrently with this "Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project" proposal.

Purpose and Need

The need is to adapt to the changed conditions in the South Fork Salmon River drainage and move toward the desired future conditions, goals and objectives as described in the Payette Forest Plan and the target landscape design in the Chicken Landscape Assessment. The Chicken Landscape Assessment was tiered to the Forest Plan and identifies a strategy to implement the plan in an ecosystem management context. The proposed action is derived from management opportunities in the landscape assessment. The purpose of each element of the proposed action is:

Salvage: To recover economic value of burned timber for counties and timberrelated industries and provide wood fiber for society. Past experience with wildfire timber recovery in southcentral Idaho indicates that prompt harvest is needed to recover the economic value of fire-killed trees. The trees in this project area, mostly ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, grand fir, and lodgepole pine, are expected to lose