

West Fork Blacks Fork watershed. Sheep grazing would continue during the period of 7/6 to 9/15 each year under a four pasture deferred grazing system meeting the direction in the Wasatch-Cache Forest Plan. Following an agreement with the grazing permittee in 1999, half of the highest unit has been rested each year with an accompanying reduction in sheep months to compensate for the sheep months of forage not available for grazing in the rested portion. This change allows 1075 sheep to graze 7/6–9/15 under deferred rotation system with planned rest for the alpine area. Half of the alpine unit is rested each year and each half receives rest for two consecutive years. This agreement resulted in a reduction of 175 sheep* from what was allowed under the current West Fork Blacks Fork Allotment Management Plan.

The updated direction will be incorporated into the allotment management plan and the term grazing permit to guide grazing management within the allotment during the coming decade, or until amendments are warranted based on changed conditions or monitoring.

Possible Alternatives

In addition to the proposed action we have tentatively identified two alternatives:

—No Grazing Alternative: Eliminate permitted grazing on the West Fork-Blacks Fork Allotment except for one trail herd that uses the allotment as an access route to the Ashley National Forest.

—Eliminate Grazing on Unit 4 of the Grazing Allotment: Continue to graze sheep under a three pasture deferred grazing system meeting Forest Plan direction. This change allows 900 sheep to graze 7/6–9/15, a reduction of 300 sheep from the numbers allowed under the current West Fork Blacks Fork Allotment Management Plan

Responsible Official

Thomas L. Tidwell, Forest Supervisor, Wasatch-Cache National Forest, USDA Forest Service, 8236 Federal Building, 125 South State Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84138, is the Responsible Official for any decision to authorize grazing and manage rangelands on the allotment within the West Fork Blacks Fork watershed on National Forest system lands. He will document his decisions and rationale in a Record of Decision.

* The sheep numbers given are the number of mother sheep (ewes). These numbers assume that each ewe will be accompanied with her current year's offspring (lambs).

Nature of Decision To Be Made

Based upon the environmental analysis in the EIS the Forest Supervisor will decide whether or not to authorize sheep grazing on the West Fork Blacks Fork Allotment, and if so under what conditions.

Scoping Process

The public is encouraged to take part in the scoping process and 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 that may be interested in, or affected by, the proposed action. While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 30 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the Draft EIS. An informational meeting is scheduled for 1 pm on March 26, 2003 at the Uinta County Library, 701 Main, Evanston, Wyoming. Information from the informational meeting will be used in the preparation of the draft and final EIS.

Comment Requested

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review

A draft environmental impact statement which be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environment impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of a availability in the **Federal Register**.

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, 553 (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 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 the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement.

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.

Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21)

Dated: March 19, 2003.

Thomas L. Tidwell,
Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 03–7177 Filed 3–25–03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Tehama County Resource Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Tehama County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will meet in Red Bluff, California. Agenda items to be covered include: (1) Introductions, (2) Approval of Minutes, (3) Public Comment, (4) Chairman Report, (5) Project Proposals/Possible Action, (6) Update on Approved Projects, (7) General Discussion, (8) Compliance Committee Report.

DATES: The meeting will be held on April 10, 2003 from 9 a.m. and end at approximately 12 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Lincoln Street School, Conference Room A, 1135 Lincoln Street, Red Bluff, CA. Individuals wishing to speak or propose agenda items must send their names and proposals to Jim Giachino, DFO, 825 N. Humboldt Ave., Willows, CA 95988.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Bobbin Gaddini, Committee Coordinator, USDA, Mendocino National Forest, Grindstone Ranger District, PO Box 164, Elk Creek, CA 95939. (530) 968-5329; e-mail ggaddini@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meeting is open to the public. Committee discussion is limited to Forest Service staff and Committee members. However, persons who wish to bring matters to the attention of the Committee may file written statements with the Committee staff before or after the meeting. Public input sessions will be provided and individuals who made written requests by April 8, 2003 will have the opportunity to address the committee at those sessions.

Dated: March 20, 2003.

James F. Giachino,
Designated Federal Official.

[FR Doc. 03-7172 Filed 3-25-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Sierra County, CA, Resource Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Sierra County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will meet on April 2, 2003, near Bassetts, east of Sierra City on Hwy 49, California. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss issues relating to implementing the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Payments to States) and the expenditure of Title II funds benefiting National Forest System lands on the Humboldt-Toiyabe, Plumas and Tahoe National Forests in Sierra County.

DATES: The meeting will be held Wednesday, April 2, 2003 at 10 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the High Country Inn, near Bassetts, east of Sierra City on Hwy 49, CA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ann Westling, Committee Coordinator,

USDA, Tahoe National Forest, 631 Coyote St, Nevada City, CA 95959, (530) 478-6205, e-mail: awestling@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Agenda items to be covered include: (1) Welcome and announcements; (2) Status of previously approved projects; and (3) Review of and decisions on new projects proposals for current year. The meeting is open to the public and the public will have an opportunity to comment at the meeting.

Dated: March 20, 2003.

Steven T. Eubanks,

Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Lawrence County Generation Project; Notice of Availability of Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability of environmental assessment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is issuing an environmental assessment (EA) for a project proposed by Hoosier Energy Electric Cooperative, Inc., (Hoosier) located in Bloomington, Indiana, and Wabash Valley Power Association, Inc., (Wabash) located in Indianapolis, Indiana. The project consists of constructing a 258 megawatt (MW) net, natural gas fired simple-cycle combustion turbine, electrical generating facility. The Lawrence County Generation Project (LCGP) is proposed to be located in Lawrence County, Indiana.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Nurul Islam, Environmental Protection Specialist, Rural Utilities Service, Engineering and Environmental Staff, Stop 1571, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1571, telephone: (202) 720-1414; e-mail: nislam@rus.usda.gov. Information is also available from Ms. Shiela M. Wheeler, Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company, Inc., 9400 Ward Parkway, Kansas City, MO 64114, telephone: (816) 822-3250, Fax: (816) 822-3515, e-mail: swheele@burnsmcd.com. All written comments regarding this project should be sent to Mr. Nurul Islam within 30 days of the publication of this notice at the above address.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The joint project proposed by Hoosier and

Wabash will consist of six (6) simple-cycle electric combustion turbines. The primary purpose of the LCGP is to meet the increasing power consumption requirements in their respective territories. Hoosier will own four (4) of the proposed turbines and Wabash will own the remaining two (2). The proposed combustion turbines will receive water from a well field that will be drilled near the project site. The project will utilize the existing gas pipeline and electric transmission line located near the proposed site for operating the facility. The LCGP will be fired on natural gas, #2 diesel fuel may be used as backup fuel. Hoosier and Wabash propose to construct the LCGP in Lawrence County, Indiana. The site is located in a rural portion of Lawrence County, approximately 3.5 miles southeast of Bedford, Indiana. The site consists of about 49 acres of pastureland; approximately 25 acres of this site will be dedicated to the turbine generating units and associated facilities.

Alternatives to the proposed project, including the purchase of power, alternative methods of power generation, and alternative site locations, etc., were evaluated by Hoosier and Wabash. RUS, in accordance with its environmental policies and procedures, required that Hoosier and Wabash prepare an environmental report reflecting the potential impacts of the proposed project. The environmental report, which includes input from Federal, State, and local agencies, has been reviewed and accepted as RUS' environmental assessment (EA) for the project in accordance with RUS' Environmental Policies and Procures, § 1794.41. The EA is available for public review at RUS, at the address provided in this notice, or the headquarters of Hoosier and Wabash, and also at the following public libraries:

Hoosier Energy Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc., 7398 N. State Road 37, Bloomington, Indiana 47402. Tel: (812) 876-0374.

Wabash Valley Power Association, Inc., 722 North High School Road, Indianapolis, Indiana 46214. Tel: (317) 581-2842.

Bedford Public Library, 1323 K Street, Bedford, Indiana 47421. Tel: (812) 275-4471.

Mitchell Community Public Library, 804 Man Street, Mitchell, Indiana 47446. Tel: (812) 849-2412.

Questions and comments should be sent to RUS at the address provided in this notice. RUS will accept questions and comments on the EA for 30 days