

Public Involvement in EIS Process

The federal Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) defines scoping as "...an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action" (40 CFR 1501.7). Among other things, the scoping process is used to invite public participation, to help identify issues, and to obtain public comment at various stages of the EIS process. The Forest's public Scoping process for FCC's proposed Idaho Cobalt Project (Project) began in mid-2001 with the Forest's identification of Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities for the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Project. The Forest's Scoping process for the proposed Project is an iterative process that continues until a Project decision (Record of Decision) is made by the Forest following completion of a final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Scoping is a process designed to identify environmental issues related to the proposed action. An initial informational Scoping packet was distributed by the Forest to Interested Parties on July 10, 2001 with a request for written comments, concerns, or suggestions regarding the proposed Project and EIS being developed by the Forest.

The following is a summary of the formal scoping meeting opportunities that have been provided by the Forest regarding FCC's proposed Project. Verbal comments were noted, and forms provided to attendees at the meetings that wished to submit written comments.

- Public Information meeting held July 20, 2001, City Center, Salmon, Idaho.
- Public Scoping meeting held October 10, 2001, in Challis, Idaho,
- Public Scoping meeting held October 11, 2001, City Center, Salmon, Idaho.

Subsequent to the July 20, 2001 public meeting, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the proposed mining project was published by the Forest in the Federal Register on September 10, 2001. The NOI invited comments on FCC's proposed Plan of Operations and the Forest's environmental analysis process for the proposed Project. The Forest also directly solicited comments from all Interested Parties included on the Forest's Forest-wide mailing list.

Outreach was also made to the Nez Perce Tribe and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe through formal letters to the Tribal Chairmen, meetings, and field review. The contact and communication with the Tribes is part of the required consultation process.

In response to the 2001 public and agency Scoping activities, the Forest received oral and/or written comments from 58 private individuals, federal agencies, groups, Native American Tribes, local governments, businesses, and the

Blackbird Mine Trustees. These comments have been compiled and documented in a Public Scoping Content Analysis Report.

Since the 2001 Scoping meetings, several informational letters providing project updates and inviting Project-related comments have been sent by the Forest to Interested Parties on the Forest-wide mailing. Additional public involvement will be invited following publication of the Draft EIS. At that time, a public meeting or meetings and a formal public comment period will be held. Input from the public on the Draft EIS will be compiled, analyzed and considered in completion of the Final EIS.