

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.

The responsible official will make the decision on this proposal after considering comments and responses, environmental consequences discussed in the final EIS, applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The decision and reasons for the decision will be documented in the Record of Decision.

Dated: February 3, 2004.

**Thomas K. Reilly,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

[FR Doc. 04-2775 Filed 2-9-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### National Tree-Marking Paint Committee Meeting

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The National Tree-Marking Paint Committee will meet in Hot Springs, Arkansas on May 11-13, 2004. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss activities related to improvements in, concerns about, and the handling and use of tree-marking paint by personnel of the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held May 11-13, 2004, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Clarion Resort, 4813 Central Avenue, Hot Springs, Arkansas. Persons who wish to file written comments before or after the meeting must send written comments to Bob Monk, Chairman, National Tree-Marking Paint Committee, San Dimas Technology and Development Center, Forest Service, USDA, 444 East Bonita Avenue, San Dimas, California 91773, or electronically to [rmonk@fs.fed.us](mailto:rmonk@fs.fed.us).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Bob Monk, Project Leader, San Dimas Technology and Development Center, Forest Service, USDA, (909) 599-1267, extension 267, or via e-mail to [rmonk@fs.fed.us](mailto:rmonk@fs.fed.us).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The National Tree-Marking Paint Committee comprises representatives from the Forest Service national headquarters, each of the nine Forest Service Regions, the Forest Products Laboratory, the Forest Service San Dimas Technology and Development Center, and the Bureau of Land Management. The General Services Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health are ad hoc members and provide technical advice to the committee.

A field trip will be held on May 11 and is designed to supplement information related to tree-marking paint. This trip is open to any member of the public participating in the public meeting on May 12-13. However, transportation is provided only for committee members.

The main session of the meeting, which is open to public attendance, will be held on May 12-13.

#### Closed Sessions

While certain segments of this meeting are open to the public, there

will be two closed sessions during the meeting. The first closed session is planned for approximately 9 to 11 a.m. on May 12. This session is reserved for individual paint manufacturers to present products and information about tree-marking paint for consideration in future testing and use by the agency. Paint manufacturers also may provide comments on tree-marking paint specifications or other requirements. This portion of the meeting is open only to paint manufacturers, the Committee, and committee staff to ensure that trade secrets will not be disclosed to other paint manufacturers or to the public. Paint manufacturers wishing to make presentations to the Tree-Marking Paint Committee during the closed session should contact the Chairman at the telephone number listed under the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this notice. The second closed session is planned for approximately 2 to 4 p.m. on May 13. This session is reserved for Federal Government employees only.

Any person with special access needs should contact the Chairman to make those accommodations. Space for individuals who are not members of the National Tree-Marking Paint Committee is limited and will be available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.

Dated: February 3, 2004.

**Abigail R. Kimbell,**

*Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System.*

[FR Doc. 04-2771 Filed 2-9-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Notice of Meeting; Southwest Oregon Province Advisory Committee

**SUMMARY:** The Southwest Oregon Province Advisory Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 17, 2004. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 5 p.m.; the open public forum begins at 11:30 a.m. It will be held at the J. Herbert Stone Nursery, 2606 Old Stage Road, Central Point, Oregon in the Employee Center. The tentative agenda include: (1) Biscuit Fire Recovery Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement update; (2) Port-Orford-cedar Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement update; and (3) Province Advisory Committee 2004 Work Plan development.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Public Affairs Officer Mary T. Marrs at (541) 858-2211, e-mail [mmarrs@fs.fed.us](mailto:mmarrs@fs.fed.us), or USDA Forest

Service, 333 West 8th Street, Medford, OR, 97501.

Dated: February 4, 2004.

**M.J. Harvie,**

*Fire and Aviation Staff Officer, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.*

[FR Doc. 04-2776 Filed 2-9-04; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-11-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Rural Utilities Service

#### Financing for Household Water Well Systems

**AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of inquiry.

**SUMMARY:** The Water and Environmental Program within the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is developing regulations to implement section 306E of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (CONACT). The Agency seeks written comments about the prospective grant program to an entity that will establish a lending program for the construction, refurbishing, and servicing of individually-owned household water well systems in rural areas that are or will be owned by the eligible individuals. RUS believes it is beneficial to have the public's input before drafting regulations and this notice of inquiry will allow the public's opinion to be considered in the drafting of those regulations.

**DATES:** Interested parties must submit written comments on or before March 11, 2004.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- *E-mail:* [RUSComments@usda.gov](mailto:RUSComments@usda.gov). Include in the subject line of the message "Water Well Systems." The e-mail must identify, in the text of the message, the name of the individual (and name of the entity if applicable) who is submitting the comment.

- *Mail:* Addressed to Richard Annan, Acting Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 1522, Washington, DC 20250-1522.

- *Hand Delivery/Courier:* Addressed to Richard Annan, Acting Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 5168-S, Washington, DC 20250-1522.

RUS requires, in hard copy, a signed original and 3 copies of all written comments (7 CFR 1700.4). Comments

will be available for public inspection during normal business hours (7 CFR part 1).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Gary Morgan, Assistant Administrator, Water and Environmental Programs, Rural Utilities Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., stop 1548 room 5145-S, Washington, DC 20250-1548. Phone: 202-690-2670. Fax: 202-720-0718. E-mail: [gary.morgan@usda.gov](mailto:gary.morgan@usda.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

On May 13, 2002, the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) was signed into law as Public Law 107-171. The CONACT was amended by section 6012 of the Farm Bill, by adding a grant program to establish a lending program. For this program, the Secretary may make grants to private nonprofit organizations for the purpose of providing loans to eligible individuals for the construction, refurbishing, and servicing of individual household water well systems in rural areas that are or will be owned by the eligible individuals.

An "eligible individual" means an individual who is a member of a household the members of which have a combined income (for the most recent 12-month period for which the information is available) that is not more than 100 percent of the median nonmetropolitan household income for the State or territory in which the individual resides, according to the most recent decennial census of the United States.

The terms of a loan made with grant funds are as follows: (a) Shall have an interest rate of 1 percent; (b) shall have a term not to exceed 20 years; and (c) shall not exceed \$8,000 for each water well system.

A recipient of a grant made under this section may use grant funds to pay administrative expenses associated with providing the assistance described in the above paragraph.

The Secretary may give priority points to an applicant that has substantial expertise and experience in promoting the safe and productive use of individually-owned household water well systems and ground water.

This program is authorized to be appropriated \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years (FY) 2003 through 2007.

There was no funding appropriated in FY 2003. However, the appropriations bill for FY 2004 includes \$500,000 for the grant program; therefore RUS is proceeding with the development of a

regulation in order to implement the program.

RUS encourages interested parties to review the Act in its entirety on the USDA Web site at <http://www.usda.gov/farmbill/>.

#### Request for Comment

RUS is requesting comment and discussion on the following topics:

1. RUS is interested in comments regarding grantees' experience with individual household water systems and the importance of having a staff with both technical and lending experience.

2. In similar RD programs, there is either a requirement that the grantee provide matching funds or that the applicant receives additional priority for providing larger matching funds. Should there be a requirement to leverage funds? Also, should RUS give priority points to those who do leverage funds?

3. What percentage of financing should be allowed and what percentage of the project costs should the borrower cover?

4. Should administrative and servicing fees be an eligible grant purpose? If so, what should be the limit on those fees?

5. RUS is considering the use of the Central Servicing Center for servicing the loans, including processing loan payments, reviewing financial statements, and other responsibilities involved in loan servicing.

6. Several RD lending programs are limited to applicants who cannot obtain financing from commercial sources at reasonable rates and terms. How should the homeowner show an inability to obtain financing from other sources?

7. What should be eligible and ineligible loan purposes?

RUS invites interested parties including, but not limited to, financial and lending institutions, well drillers, trade associations, consumer groups and individuals to provide RUS, any information or analyses they believe to be relevant to the issues discussed in this Notice and to the implementation of the grant program.

Dated: January 16, 2004.

**Hilda Gay Legg,**

*Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.*

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