

notice also announces the availability of our written determination and our finding of no significant impact.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** March 10, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** You may read a copy of the determination, an environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact, the petition for a determination of nonregulated status submitted by Aventis CropScience, and all comments received on the petition and the environmental assessment in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141, USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure that someone is available to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Susan Koehler, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, APHIS, Suite 5B05, 4700 River Road Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 734-4886. To obtain a copy of the determination or environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact, contact Ms. Kay Peterson at (301) 734-4885; e-mail: [Kay.Peterson@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Kay.Peterson@aphis.usda.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Background**

On February 12, 2002, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) received a petition (APHIS Petition No. 02-042-01p) from Aventis CropScience (Aventis) of Research Triangle Park, NC, requesting a determination of nonregulated status under 7 CFR part 340 for cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum* L.) designated as Transformation Event LLCotton25 (LLCotton25), which has been genetically engineered for tolerance to the herbicide glufosinate. The Aventis petition states that the subject cotton should not be regulated by APHIS because it does not present a plant pest risk.

On December 16, 2002, APHIS published a notice in the **Federal Register** (67 FR 77034-77035, Docket No. 02-092-1) announcing that the Aventis petition and an environmental assessment (EA) were available for public review. This notice also discussed the role of APHIS, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Food and Drug Administration in regulating the subject cotton and food

products developed from it. APHIS received two comments on the petition and the EA during the 60-day comment period which ended February 14, 2002. The comments were received from a cotton industry organization and a cotton farmer, and both supported nonregulated status for LLCotton25.

LLCotton25 has been genetically engineered to contain a *bar* gene isolated from *Streptomyces hygroscopicus* strain ATCC21705. The *bar* gene encodes phosphinothricin-N-acetyltransferase (PAT), and the PAT enzyme catalyzes the conversion of L-phosphinothricin, the active ingredient in glufosinate, to an inactive form, thus conferring tolerance to the herbicide. Expression of the added genes is controlled in part by gene sequences from the plant pathogens cauliflower mosaic virus and *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*. *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer was used to transfer the added genes into the recipient Coker 312 cotton variety.

LLCotton25 has been considered a regulated article under the regulations in 7 CFR part 340 because it contains gene sequences from plant pathogens. This cotton has been field tested since 1999 in the United States under APHIS notifications. In the process of reviewing the notifications for field trials of the subject cotton, APHIS determined that the vectors and other elements were disarmed and that the trials, which were conducted under conditions of reproductive and physical confinement or isolation, would not present a risk of plant pest introduction or dissemination.

**Determination**

Based on its analysis of the data submitted by Aventis, a review of other scientific data, field tests of the subject cotton, and comments submitted by the public, APHIS has determined that LLCotton25: (1) Exhibits no plant pathogenic properties; (2) is no more likely to become weedy than the non-transgenic parental line or other cultivated cotton; (3) is unlikely to increase the weediness potential for any other cultivated or wild species with which it can interbreed; (4) will not cause damage to raw or processed agricultural commodities; (5) will not harm threatened or endangered species or organisms that are beneficial to agriculture; and (6) should not reduce the ability to control pests and weeds in cotton or other crops. Therefore, APHIS has concluded that the subject cotton and any progeny derived from hybrid crosses with other nontransformed cotton varieties will be as safe to grow as cotton in traditional breeding

programs that is not subject to regulation under 7 CFR part 340.

The effect of this determination is that Aventis' LLCotton25 is no longer considered a regulated article under APHIS' regulations in 7 CFR part 340. Therefore, the requirements pertaining to regulated articles under those regulations no longer apply to the subject cotton or its progeny. However, importation of LLCotton25 and seeds capable of propagation are still subject to the restrictions found in APHIS' foreign quarantine notices in 7 CFR part 319 and imported seed regulations in 7 CFR part 361.

**National Environmental Policy Act**

An EA was prepared to examine the potential environmental impacts associated with a determination of nonregulated status for Aventis' LLCotton25. The EA was prepared in accordance with (1) the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372). Based on that EA, APHIS has reached a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) with regard to its determination that LLCotton25 and lines developed from it are no longer regulated articles under its regulations in 7 CFR part 340. Copies of the EA and FONSI are available from the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Done in Washington, DC, this 18th day of March, 2003.

**Kevin Shea,**

*Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.*

[FR Doc. 03-6798 Filed 3-20-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-34-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**Forest Service**

**Notice of Resource Advisory Committee Meeting**

**AGENCY:** North Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee, Kamiah, Idaho, USDA, Forest Service.

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463) and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-

393) the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests' North Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee will meet Thursday, April 17, 2003 in Potlatch, Idaho for a business meeting. The meeting is open to the public.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The business meeting on April 17 begins at 10 a.m. (PST), at the City Library, Potlatch, Idaho. Agenda topics will include discussion of potential projects. A public forum will begin at 2 p.m. (PST).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ihor Mereszczak, Staff Officer and Designated Federal Officer, at (208) 935-2513.

**Ihor Mereszczak,**

*Acting Forest Supervisor.*

[FR Doc. 03-6834 Filed 3-20-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-11-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Eastern Arizona Counties Resource Advisory Committee

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Eastern Arizona Counties Resource Advisory Committee will meet in Payson, Arizona. The purpose of the meeting is to review and approve projects for funding and approve evaluation criteria for the projects.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held March 28, 2003, at 1 p.m. An alternate date of April 11, 2003, will be used if weather precludes meeting on March 28th.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Gila County Community College, Community Room, at 201 Mud Springs Road, Payson, Arizona. Send written comments to Robert Dyson, Eastern Arizona Counties Resource Advisory Committee, c/o Forest Service, USDA, P.O. Box 640, Springerville, Arizona 85938 or electronically to [rdyson@fs.fed.us](mailto:rdyson@fs.fed.us).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Robert Dyson, Public Affairs Officer, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, (928) 333-4301.

**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 Pub. L. 106-393 related matters to the attention of the Committee may file written statements with the Committee staff three weeks before the meeting. Opportunity for public input will be provided.

Dated: March 17, 2003.

**John C. Bedell,**

*Forest Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.*

[FR Doc. 03-6880 Filed 3-20-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-11-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Rural Utilities Service

#### Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

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

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35, as amended), the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by May 20, 2003.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 4036 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 720-9550. FAX: (202) 720-4120.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulation (5 CFR 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see 5 CFR 1320.8(d)). This notice identifies an information collection that RUS is submitting to OMB for reinstatement.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection

techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 1522, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-1522. FAX: (202) 720-4120.

*Title:* 7 CFR 1744-C, Advance and Disbursement of Funds—Telecommunications.

*OMB Control Number:* 0572-0023.

*Type of Request:* Revision of a currently approved information collection package.

*Abstract:* The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) manages the Telecommunications loan program in accordance with the Rural Electrification Act (RE Act) of 1936, 7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*, as amended, and as prescribed by OMB Circular A-129, Policies for Federal Credit Programs and Non-Tax Receivables.

In addition, the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 101-171) amended the RE Act to add title VI, Rural Broadband Access, to provide loans and loan guarantees to fund the cost of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment for the provision of broadband service in eligible rural communities. RUS therefore requires Telecommunications and Broadband borrowers to submit RUS Form 481, Financial Requirement Statement. This form implements certain provisions of the standard RUS loan documents by setting forth requirements and procedures to be followed by borrowers in obtaining advances and making disbursements of loan funds.

*Estimate of Burden:* Public reporting for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response.

*Respondents:* Business or other for profit, not-for-profit institutions.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 815.

*Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent:* 4.5.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents:* 3,660 hours.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Michele Brooks, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, at (202) 690-1078. FAX: (202) 720-4120.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: March 7, 2003.

**Hilda Gay Legg,**

*Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.*

[FR Doc. 03-6800 Filed 3-20-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-15-P**