

4. Older stands of aspen would be regenerated and replaced by younger stands of aspen, reducing and/or changing the aesthetic value of these stands. Older trees with large, white boles would be replaced by thickets of seedlings and saplings in the short term. Fall color viewing would also be impacted.

5. The proposed fuels treatments would remove young trees and seedlings from the spruce/fir stands, resulting in the eventual loss of the timber stand due to lack of regeneration.

6. The proposed fuels treatments are too costly to implement.

7. The proposed fuels treatment would reduce or eliminate understory vegetation that serves as a barrier to off-road motorized vehicles, especially by ATV's (All Terrain Vehicles).

Comments Requested. Comments will continue to be received and considered throughout the analysis process.

Comments received in response to this notice and through scoping, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record of this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR parts 215 or 217. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within a specified number of days.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review: A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. The draft EIS is expected to be filed with the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and to be available for public review. At that time the EPA will publish a notice of availability of the draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period for the draft environmental impact statement will be forty-five days from the date the EPA's notice of availability

appears in the **Federal Register**. Comments on the draft EIS should be as specific as possible and may address the adequacy of the statement or the merits of the alternatives discussed (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 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 reviewers' position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could have been 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*, (9th Circuit, 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 the time 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 about 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 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.

In the final EIS, the Forest Service is required to respond to substantive comments and responses received during the comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the draft EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making a

decision regarding the proposal. The Responsible Official will document the decision and rationale for the decision in a Record of Decision. The final EIS is scheduled for completion in January, 2003. The decision will be subject to review under Forest Service Appeal Regulations.

Dated: July 8, 2003.

Robert A. Russell,

Forest Supervisor, Dixie National Forest.

[FR Doc. 03-18176 Filed 7-17-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Notice of Proposed Changes to Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) of the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Indiana

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

ACTION: Notice of availability of proposed changes in Section IV of the FOTG of the NRCS in Indiana for review and comment.

SUMMARY: It is the intention of NRCS in Indiana to issue three revised conservation practice standards in Section IV of the FOTG. The revised standards are: Critical Area Planting (342), Structure for Water Control (587), and Terrace (600). These practices may be used in conservation systems that treat highly erodible land and/or wetlands.

DATES: Comments will be received for a 30-day period commencing with this date of publication.

ADDRESSES: Address all requests and comments to Jane E. Hardisty, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 6013 Lakeside Blvd., Indianapolis, Indiana 46278. Copies of this standard will be made available upon written request. You may submit your electronic requests and comments to darrell.brown@in.usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jane E. Hardisty, 317-290-3200.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 343 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 states that after enactment of the law, revisions made to NRCS state technical guides used to carry out highly erodible land and wetland provisions of the law, shall be made available for public review and comment. For the next 30 days, the NRCS in Indiana will receive comments relative to the proposed

changes. Following that period, a determination will be made by the NRCS in Indiana regarding disposition of those comments and a final determination of changes will be made.

Dated: July 7, 2003.

Jane E. Hardisty,

State Conservationist, Indianapolis, Indiana.

[FR Doc. 03-18347 Filed 7-17-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-16-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Broadband Pilot Grant Program

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is announcing the process by which Fiscal Year 2003 funding of its pilot grant program for the provision of broadband transmission service in rural America will be made available. For Fiscal Year 2003, \$10 million in grants will be made available through the further funding of the national competition announced on July 8, 2002, to provide broadband transmission service on a "community-oriented connectivity" basis. The community-oriented connectivity approach targets rural, economically-challenged communities and offers a means for the deployment of broadband transmission services to rural schools, libraries, education centers, health care providers, law enforcement agencies, public safety organizations as well as residents and businesses. This all-encompassing connectivity concept will give small, rural communities a chance to benefit from the advanced technologies that are necessary to foster economic growth, provide quality education and health care opportunities, and increase and enhance public safety efforts.

DATES: Successful grant applicants will be notified no later than September 15, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Roberta D. Purcell, Assistant Administrator, Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 1590, Room 4056, Washington, DC 20250-1590. Telephone number (202) 720-9554, facsimile (202) 720-0810.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On July 8, 2002, RUS published a Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) in the **Federal Register** at 67 FR 45079 announcing its "community-oriented connectivity" pilot grant program for the provision of

broadband transmission service in rural America. Twenty million dollars in grant authority was made available to deploy broadband infrastructure to extremely rural, lower income communities on a "community-oriented connectivity" basis. The "community-oriented connectivity" concept integrates the deployment of broadband infrastructure with the practical, everyday uses and applications of the facilities. This broadband access is intended to promote economic development and provide enhanced educational and health care opportunities. RUS provided financial assistance to eligible entities that were proposing to deploy broadband transmission service in rural communities where such service did not currently exist and who would connect the critical community facilities including the local schools, libraries, hospitals, police, fire, and rescue services and who would operate a community center that provides free and open access to residents.

In response to this NOFA, RUS received more than 300 applications totaling more than \$185 million in funding requests. As part of a national competition, RUS reviewed the applications for eligibility and scored the applications according to the rurality of the project, the economic need of the project service area, and the community benefits to be derived from the proposed service. On May 16, 2003, Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, announced the 40 highest scoring grants totaling \$20,184,642. This announcement fully utilized RUS' 2002 appropriation.

Due to the overwhelming response to the July 8, 2002, NOFA, RUS has eligible applications on hand totaling more than the \$10 million appropriation received for Fiscal Year 2003. To eliminate the need for fully eligible applicants to resubmit applications for Fiscal Year 2003, RUS will utilize its 2003 appropriation by funding eligible projects submitted in accordance with the July 8, 2002 NOFA. Announcement of the 2003 appropriation grant awards will be made no later than September 15, 2003.

Dated: June 25, 2003.

Hilda Gay Legg,

Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.

[FR Doc. 03-18191 Filed 7-17-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-15-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of funds availability.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) announces a new grant program to finance the conversion of television services from analog to digital broadcasting for public television stations serving rural areas. For Fiscal Year 2003, \$15 million in grants will be made available through a national competition to enable public television stations which serve substantial rural populations to continue serving their coverage areas.

DATES: Applications for grants will be accepted as of the date of this notice through September 16, 2003. All applications must be delivered to RUS or bear postmark no later than September 16, 2003. Comments regarding the information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act must be received on or before September 16, 2003, to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Applications shall be submitted to Roberta D. Purcell, Assistant Administrator, Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service, USDA, STOP 1590, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Roberta D. Purcell, Assistant Administrator, Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service, STOP 1590, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1590, Telephone (202) 720-9554, Facsimile (202) 720-0810.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Information Collection and Recordkeeping Requirements

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), RUS invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). These requirements are pending emergency clearance by OMB.

Comments on this notice must be received by September 16, 2003.

Comments are invited on (a) whether the 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 burden including