

resources to harvesting damaged timber, located on private or non-NFS public lands, which is in need of urgent removal. Catastrophic events which may result in the need for urgent removal of damaged timber include, but are not limited to, fire, flood, insect and disease infestations, drought, and windthrow.

The intended effects of this information collection is to assure that extensions of the time allowed to harvest National Forest System timber sale contracts are consistent with the requirements of the National Forest Management Act (16 U.S.C. 472a), while minimizing the loss of National Forest System timber adjacent to other timber infested with insects and disease or damaged by fire; reduce the threat to public safety and property resulting from such catastrophic events; and promote the wise use and conservation of the natural resources.

The National Forest Management Act (16 U.S.C. 472a) requires that extensions of contract time shall not be granted unless "the purchaser has diligently performed in accordance with an approved plan of operation or that the substantial overriding public interest justifies the extension." Regulations at 36 CFR 223.115 mirror the National Forest Management Act.

Regulations at 36 CFR 223.53(b) require the Regional Forester to verify in writing that: (1) A specific catastrophe occurred for which urgent removal extensions should be granted; and (2) Failure to harvest the damaged non-National Forest System timber promptly could result in the following: (i) Pose a threat to public safety, (ii) Create a threat of an insect or disease epidemic to National Forest System or other lands or resources, or (iii) Significant private or other public resource loss.

Following such a determination, to obtain an urgent removal extension on a National Forest System timber sale contract, a purchaser must make a written request to the contracting officer which includes the following: (1) An explanation of why the harvest of undamaged (green) National Forest System timber within the term of the existing National Forest System contract(s) will prevent or otherwise impede the removal of damaged non-National Forest System timber in need of expeditious removal; and (2) Documentation that the manufacturing facilities or logging equipment capacity available to the purchaser would be insufficient to provide for both the rapid salvage of damaged non-National Forest System timber in need of expeditious removal and continued harvest of undamaged (green) National Forest

System timber under contract with the Forest Service.

The contracting officer must obtain the information provided by the purchaser to verify that there is a legitimate need to grant the request for urgent removal extension(s) in accordance with the regulations at 36 CFR 223.53.

Information will be collected in writing. Electronic technology is not appropriate for collecting site-specific, one-time information. Facsimile extension applications are acceptable. Each request for an urgent removal extension is unique. There is no duplication of information and the information is only available from the timber sale purchaser. Only the minimum amount of information required to make the contracting officer's determination is collected.

The Forest Service cannot assure that it meets its statutory requirements in the National Forest Management Act for extending timber sale contracts if the information collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

Estimate of Annual Burden: The public reporting burden to provide information when requesting a timber sale contract urgent removal extension is estimated to average 6 hours per response.

Type of Respondents: Individuals, large and small businesses, and corporations purchasing National Forest System timber sales.

Estimated Annual Number of Respondents: 25.

Estimated Annual Number of Responses per Respondent: 1 per year.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 150 hours.

Comment is Invited

Comment is invited on: (1) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes and the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical or scientific utility; (2) 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; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

All comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses when provided, will become

a matter of public record. Comments will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval.

Dated: February 1, 2006.

Frederick Norbury,
Associate Deputy Chief, NFS.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Notice of Sanders County Resource Advisory Committee Meeting

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

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 Lolo and Kootenai National Forests' Sanders County Resource Advisory Committee will meet on February 16 at 7 p.m. in Thompson Falls, Montana for a business meeting. The meeting is open to the public.

DATES: February 16, 2006.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Thompson Falls Courthouse, 1111 Main Street, Thompson Falls, MT 59873.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Randy Hojem, Designated Federal Official (DFO), District Ranger, Plains Ranger District, Lolo National Forest at (406) 826-3821.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Agenda topics include reviewing progress on current RAC projects, and receiving public comment. If the meeting location is changed, notice will be posted in the local newspapers, including the Clark Fork Valley Press, and Sanders County Ledger.

Dated: February 6, 2006.

Randy Hojem,
DFO, Plains Ranger District, Lolo National Forest.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.
