

Forest Service, USDA

§ 218.12

§ 218.9 Objection time periods and process.

(a) *Time to file an objection.* Written objections, including any attachments, must be filed with the Reviewing Officer within 30 days following the publication date of the legal notice of the EA or FEIS in the newspaper of record (§ 218.4(b)). It is the responsibility of objectors to ensure that their objection is received in a timely manner.

(b) *Computation of time periods.* (1) All time periods are computed using calendar days, including Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays. However, when the time period expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, the time is extended to the end of the next Federal working day as stated in the legal notice or to the end of the calendar day (11:59 p.m.) for objections filed by electronic means such as e-mail or facsimile machine.

(2) The day after publication of the legal notice for this subpart of the EA or FEIS in the newspaper of record (§ 218.4(b)) is the first day of the objection-filing period.

(3) The publication date of the legal notice of the EA or FEIS in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Objectors may not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

(c) *Evidence of timely filing.* Timeliness shall be determined by:

(1) The date of the postmark, e-mail, fax, or other means of filing (for example, express delivery service) of an objection and any attachment;

(2) The time and date imprint at the correct Reviewing Officer's office on a hand-delivered objection and any attachments; or

(3) When an objection is electronically mailed, the objector should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgment from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the objector does not receive an automated acknowledgment of the receipt of the objection, it is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

(d) *Extensions.* Time extensions are not permitted.

(e) *Other timeframes.* The Reviewing Officer shall issue a written response to

the objector(s) concerning their objection(s) within 30 days following the end of the objection-filing period.

§ 218.10 Resolution of objections.

(a) *Meetings.* Prior to the issuance of the Reviewing Officer's written response, either the Reviewing Officer or the objector may request to meet to discuss issues raised in the objection and potential resolution. The Reviewing Officer has the discretion to determine whether or not adequate time remains in the review period to make a meeting with the objector practical. All meetings are open to the public.

(b) *Response to objections.* (1) A written response shall set forth the reasons for the response, but need not be a point-by-point review, and may contain instructions to the Responsible Official, if necessary. In cases involving more than one objection to a proposed authorized hazardous fuel reduction project, the Reviewing Officer may consolidate objections and issue one or more responses.

(2) There shall be no further review from any other Forest Service or USDA official of the Reviewing Officer's written response to an objection.

§ 218.11 Timing of authorized hazardous fuel reduction project decision.

(a) The Responsible Official may not issue a Record of Decision (ROD) or Decision Notice (DN) concerning an authorized hazardous fuel reduction project subject to the provisions of this subpart until the Reviewing Officer has responded to all pending objections.

(b) When no objection is filed within the 30-day time period, the Reviewing Officer shall notify the Responsible Official, and approval of the authorized hazardous fuel reduction project in a Record of Decision or Decision Notice may occur on, but not before, the fifth business day following the end of the objection-filing period.

§ 218.12 Secretary's authority.

(a) Nothing in this section shall restrict the Secretary of Agriculture from exercising any statutory authority regarding the protection, management, or administration of National Forest System lands.