



CHAIRMAN

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

July 21, 2008

Mark Rey
Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 200-A
Washington, DC 20250

Re: Forest Service NEPA Regulations

Dear Under Secretary Rey:

Thank you for forwarding the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The CEQ regulations provide that agencies review their NEPA policies and procedures and, in consultation with CEQ, revise them as necessary to ensure full compliance with the purposes and provisions of NEPA (40 C.F.R. § 1507.3).

CEQ reviewed the proposed conversion of the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service NEPA procedures from the Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 and Forest Service Manual 1950 to regulations at 36 C.F.R. part 220. This review included consideration of the public comments as well as our discussions. The proposed changes and conversion of the procedures as regulations was published in the Federal Register August 16, 2007 (72 FR 45998). The final regulations are attached.

Based on our review, CEQ concludes that the Forest Service NEPA regulations are in conformance with NEPA and the CEQ regulations. The amendments and conversion to regulations will take effect once the notice of the final rule is published in the Federal Register.

Thank you for your responsiveness to our comments and recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



James L. Connaughton

Attachment