

Forest Service**Oil and gas leasing; Escalante Known Geological Structure (KGS); Utah****AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Notice of availability of draft environmental impact statement and public meeting schedule.

SUMMARY: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Oil and Gas Leasing in the Escalante Known Geological Structure (KGS), Garfield County, Utah, is now available for public review. In addition, the Forest Service gives notice of two public meetings to be held to receive public comments on the DEIS.

DATES: Written comments on the analysis and recommendations contained in the DEIS will be accepted until October 20, 1987. Public meetings will be held to receive public comments on the DEIS on Wednesday, September 9, 1987, at 7 p.m. at the Hilton Hotel (Downtown) 15 West 500 South, Salt Lake City, Utah and on Monday, September 14, 1987, at 7 p.m., at the Escalante Community Center, Escalante, Utah.

ADDRESSES: Requests for copies as well as written comments on the DEIS should be addressed to: Forest Supervisor, Dixie National Forest, P.O. Box 580, Cedar City, Utah 84720.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Clavin Bird, Planner, Dixie National Forest, P.O. Box 580, Cedar City, Utah, 84720; telephone 801/588-2421.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Escalante Known Geological Structure (KGS) encompasses approximately 80,000 acres of land within the Escalante and Teasdale Ranger Districts of the Dixie National Forest and the Cedar City District managed by the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior. In addition to nonwilderness lands, the KGS includes lands within the Box-Death Hollow Wilderness and the Phipps-Death Hollow Instant Study Area.

The DEIS assesses potential impacts associated with oil and gas and carbon dioxide leasing in the KGS. No site-specific proposals have been submitted by industry; therefore, the levels of leasing and subsequent development considered in the DEIS are based on assumptions utilizing available information.

The preparation of the DEIS was a cooperative effort between the Forest Service, as Lead Agency, and the Bureau of Land Management, as Cooperating Agency

In accordance with established guidelines, the Forest Service is giving supplementary notice to the notice of availability published by the Environmental Protection Agency in the Federal Register. This will insure that interested parties are aware that the DEIS is available for review and give notice of public meetings scheduled to receive public comments.

Date: August 12, 1987.

T.A. Roederer,

Deputy Regional Forester, Resources.

[FR Doc. 87-16782 Filed 6-17-87; 8:45 am]

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National Environmental Policy Act; Revised Implementing Procedures**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Notice of interim policy.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service is issuing an Interim directive to clarify its National Environmental Policy Act implementation policy on categorical exclusions from documentation. The new direction emphasizes the importance of recordkeeping in conjunction with categorical exclusion determinations, and it limits the types of low-impact silvicultural activities that normally qualify for categorical exclusion. This directive is being issued to Agency personnel in the Forest Service Manual and replaces existing policy, which was published in the Federal Register on June 24, 1985 (50 FR 28081-28082).

EFFECTIVE DATE: In order to allow sufficient time for distribution of the interim directive to affected Forest Service personnel, the policy will become effective on August 25, 1987. The limitation on low-impact silvicultural activities applies only to the salvage, thinning, and small harvest cuts that are proposed, analyzed, and decided after issuance of the interim directive. In other words, proposed actions which have been analyzed and categorically excluded under previous policy do not have to be re-analyzed as a result of the interim directive.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions and comments about this policy should be addressed to David E. Ketcham, Director of Environmental Coordination, Forest Service, USDA, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090, (202) 447-4708.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Forest Service is in the process of revising Forest Service Manual Chapter 1950 and Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, which contain the Forest Service policy and procedures for

implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing regulations at 40 CFR Part 1500 et seq. A draft of the proposed changes will be published in the Federal Register this fall for public comment; the final policy and procedures should be adopted by January 1988.

In the interim, to respond to questions raised about the use of categorical exclusions, the Forest Service is issuing an interim directive to clarify its policy. The interim directive will be in effect until the final policy and procedures become effective. The interim directive:

- Deletes a paraphrase of the Council on Environmental Quality's definition of categorical exclusion and requires employees to refer directly to the CEQ regulations, thus eliminating a potential for inconsistent interpretation between the Manual paraphrase and the actual CEQ regulations.
- Emphasizes that, as for all proposed actions, units must establish and maintain a project file for any records created during environmental analyses of proposed actions found to be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement.
- Provides examples of the types of records that might be included in the project file.
- Limits the use of categorical exclusions for low-limit silvicultural activities to "salvage, thinning, and small harvest cuts of less than 100 thousand board feet or less than 10 acres."
- Adds "miscellaneous forest product sales" as a representative example of the type of activity that may be categorically excluded from documentation.

The full text of the interim directive appears at the conclusion of this notice.

Allan J. West,
Acting Chief, FS.

Date: August 13, 1987.

Forest Service Manual

Washington, DC

Interim Directive No. 14.

Duration: One year.

Chapter: 1950—Environmental Policy and Procedures.

Posting Notice: Last ID was No. 13 to FSM 1920, dated 1/20/87.

This interim directive clarifies direction in section 1952.2—Categorical Exclusion From Documentation. It

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removes a paraphrase of the Council on Environmental Quality's definition of categorical exclusion. It emphasizes that a project file should be maintained for any records created during analyses of actions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. It provides examples of the types of records that might be included in the project file. It also limits the use of categorical exclusions for low-impact silvicultural activities to "salvage, thinning, and small harvest cuts of less than 100 thousand board feet or less than 10 acres" and adds "miscellaneous forest product sales."

This policy change applies only to the salvage, thinning, and small harvest cuts that are proposed, analyzed, and decided after the effective date of this interim directive. In other words, proposed actions which have been analyzed and categorically excluded under previous policy do not have to be re-analyzed and documented in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement as a result of this interim directive.

1952.2—Categorical Exclusion From Documentation In An Environmental Assessment Or An Environmental Impact Statement. (40 CFR 1506.4). In addition to the seven categories of actions excluded from documentation in 7 CFR 1b.3, certain other actions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. To determine if an action may be categorically excluded, an environmental analysis, including scoping, must be conducted. (FSH 1909.15, ch. 10 and 20).

The guide for determining whether an action may be excluded is the significance of the effects (40 CFR 1506.27). In unusual circumstances an action that normally might be categorically excluded may have a significant environmental effect on the quality of the human environment and require an environmental impact statement. Unusual circumstances might include areas involving threatened and endangered species; critical habitat; flood plains; wetlands; and specially designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or roadless areas designated for further planning.

Interested and affected persons must be informed in an appropriate manner (40 CFR 1506.6 and FSM 1950.3) of a decision to proceed with an action that has been categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

During the analysis, maintain a project file for any records prepared, such as (1) a list of interested and affected people contacted during scoping, (2) the results of the analysis, (3) documentation of the determination of consistency with the Forest Plan (FSM 1920, ID No. 13, 1/20/87), (4) documentation of the notification given of the decision to proceed with an action that has been categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement (for example, telephone message, news release, and so forth), and (5) a list of the people notified of the decision to proceed.

Typical classes and representative examples of actions that might be categorically excluded are listed below. Experience and environmental analysis indicate that these actions and classes usually do not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively. These typical classes include most forest management activities that normally could be categorically excluded. Proposed actions considered for categorical exclusion which are not clearly within a typical class must have no more environmental impact than those which are.

1. Administrative actions, such as road and area closures; restrictions on travel or use, such as camping, boating, or hunting; and posting signs and markers.

2. Construction of low-impact facilities or improvements, such as auxiliary support buildings or other structures; picnic areas and campgrounds; temporary and other low-standard roads, such as traffic service level "D" roads (FSH 7709.56); and trails.

3. Repair and maintenance activities, such as on buildings, grounds, trails, rights-of-way, and range improvements.

4. Low-impact silvicultural activities that are limited in size and duration and that primarily use existing roads and facilities, such as firewood and miscellaneous forest product sales; salvage, thinning, and small harvest cuts of less than 100 thousand board feet or less than 10 acres; site preparation; and planting and seeding.

5. Low-impact range management activities, such as fencing, seeding, and installing water facilities.

6. Issuance or modification of authorizations or agreements for such uses of lands or facilities as road maintenance and additional use of existing roads, rights-of-way, and easements.

7. Low-impact pest management activities, such as suppressing nuisance

insects and poisonous plants in campgrounds and picnic areas; controlling cones and seed insects in seed orchards; and fumigating to control weeds in nurseries.

8. Mineral and energy activities of limited size, duration, and degree of disturbance, such as preliminary exploration and removal of small mineral samples.

9. Fish and wildlife management activities, such as improving habitat, installing fish ladders, and stocking native or established species.

10. Transfer of interests in land, such as sales, exchanges, or interchanges pursuant to the Small Tracts Act; purchases and gifts; and small transfers and trades with other Federal agencies.

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Soil Conservation Service

Availability of Record of Decision; Howard Creek Watershed, WV

AGENCY: Soil Conservation Service,
USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability of a
record of decision.

SUMMARY: Paul S. Dunn, responsible Federal official for projects administered under the provisions of Pub. L. 83-566, 16 U.S.C. 1001-1008, in the State of West Virginia, is hereby providing notification that a record of decision to proceed with the installation of the Howard Creek Watershed project is available. Single copies of this record of decision may be obtained from Paul S. Dunn at the address shown below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Paul S. Dunn, Assistant State
Conservationist, Soil Conservation
Service, 75 High Street, Room 301,
Morgantown, West Virginia, 26505,
telephone (304) 241-4151.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
Program No. 10.904, Watershed Protection
and Flood Prevention. State and local review
procedures for Federal and Federally assisted
programs and projects are applicable.)

Paul S. Dunn,
Assistant State Conservationist.

August 10, 1987

Record of Decision, Howard Creek
Watershed, Greenbrier County, West
Virginia

1 Purpose: As State Conservationist
for the Soil Conservation Service, I am
the Responsible Federal Official (RFO)
for all Soil Conservation Service
projects in West Virginia.