

NEWS

United States
Department of
Agriculture

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Payette National Forest

Date: September 18, 2008

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Payette National Forest is pleased to announce the release of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) that re-analyzes the effects of current and proposed management on Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (bighorn sheep) viability within the Payette National Forest (PNF).

DSEIS and the Forest Plan

This DSEIS is a supplemental analysis to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Payette Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) or Forest Plan. This DSEIS does not change the proposed action or purpose and need as described in the Forest Plan. This DSEIS is intended to provide additional information and analysis to comply with the Chief's appeal decision of March 9, 2005. This DSEIS should be looked at in conjunction with the Forest Plan (LRMP FEIS).

Preferred Alternative

An agency preferred alternative is identified in the DSEIS. This is not the agency's final decision. An agency preferred alternative was identified in accordance with agency regulations. The proposed preferred alternative with standards and guidelines offers one option to minimize the potential for contact between domestic sheep and bighorn sheep. Between the release of the draft and final SEIS we are seeking specific feedback on this and other options to achieve separation. We look forward to the public's feedback on the draft bighorn sheep analysis and the potential efficacy of the management direction as proposed by the draft standards and guidelines.

What's Next?

We would like to receive substantive comments on the draft analysis and management direction from the public as we move forward with this difficult issue. Some specific areas that the PNF would like to hear from the public as it pertains to bighorn sheep viability are as follows:

- Are opposing viewpoints and uncertainties surrounding the science considered?
- What level of risk for contact is acceptable?
- What other options/methods should we consider to achieve separation between domestic and bighorn sheep?
- Are there any issues or concerns that have been overlooked?

The PNF encourages the public to comment on the DSEIS as we seek to validate final conclusions on the viability concerns for bighorn sheep. We need to balance public comment with the science information as we eventually move towards a Record of Decision (ROD) and

final SEIS that amends the Payette National Forest's Forest Plan. "Much work remains to be done between draft and final and the public review of this draft is the first step toward that goal," said Forest Supervisor Suzanne Rainville. "I look forward to receiving comments and working with a variety of individuals and organizations on this complex land management issue."

Public Meetings

The PNF will be hosting two public information meetings during the next several weeks to discuss the DSEIS and aid the public's understanding of the issues presented in the analysis. These informational meetings will not be hearings and official comments or statements will not be solicited. However, comment forms will be available, and the agenda will include time for a question and answer period. The dates and locations of these meetings are:

September 29, 2008

6:00-9:00 p.m.

Payette National Forest Supervisor's Office
800 Lakeside Avenue
McCall, Idaho 83638

October 6, 2008

6:00-9:00 p.m.

Holiday Inn – Airport
3300 Vista Ave
Boise, ID 83705

Comment Period

The comment period for this DSEIS will be 90 days and begins the day following publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to publish the Notice of Availability of the draft documents in the Federal Register on September 26, 2008. Comments must be postmarked by the 90th day following publication of the NOA in the Federal Register. If the time period expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, comments are due by the end of the next Federal working day.

To assist the PNF, it is helpful if comments include specific pages of the DSEIS and Draft Management Direction. Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record, and will be available for public inspection.

Comments may be submitted via U.S. mail to:

Payette National Forest
Attention: Bighorn Sheep Comments
800 Lakeside Avenue
McCall, ID 83638

Or via e-mail to: payettebighorn@fs.fed.us

To receive a copy or a compact disc of the DSEIS for management of bighorn sheep on the PNF please contact Sylvia Clark at (208) 634-0796 or visit the PNF website at http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/payette/publications/big_horn/big_horn_sheep_documents_index.shtml to view and/or download a copy.

Editor's Note: Interested media are invited to a Technical Briefing on the DSEIS on September 22, 2008 at the PNF headquarters in McCall from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. Background information will be provided. There will be no prepared statements or press availability at this event. This will be an informational briefing to aid the media's understanding of the document.

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