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[Notices]

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[FR Doc No: 97-27574]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Use of Certified Forage To Prevent the Spread of Noxious Weeds on  
National Forest System Lands in Montana

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice: adoption of final policy.

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SUMMARY: The Regional Forester for the Northern Region of the Forest Service has adopted a final policy which prohibits the use of hay, grain, straw, cubes or pelletized feed on National Forest System lands in Montana unless it is certified as free of noxious weeds or noxious weed seeds. This requirement will affect such users as recreationists using pack and saddle stock, ranchers operating under Forest Service grazing permits, outfitters and guides operating under Forest Service permits, and contractors who use straw or hay for reseeding or erosion control purposes on National Forest System-administered lands in Montana. This proposal has been developed in coordination with the State of Montana and Bureau of Land Management Montana State Office, which is publishing a similar decision in a separate notice in this same part of today's Federal Register. The intended effect is to coordinate prevention of the spread of undesirable weeds on federal lands in Montana.

DATES: Effective immediately.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

James Olivarez, Forest and Rangeland Staff, Northern Region, Forest Service, (406) 329-3621.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50, the Regional Forester is issuing orders to close or restrict uses on National Forest System lands. As adopted, this requirement to close National Forest System lands to users who do not use a certified weed-free forage or similar products results in a standard closure order applicable to all National Forest System lands in Montana. The Northern Regional Forester has been implementing a similar policy on a forest-by-forest basis in Montana since 1989. The Montana State Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is adopting a similar standard requirement for all public lands under its jurisdiction. The BLM decision appears in a separate notice in this part of today's Federal Register.

Response to Public Comments

There was one written comment received. It was in support of this

policy implementation via a closure order.

The text of the Special Closure Order shall be published in newspapers across the State of Montana, as well as direct notification by mail of interested and effected groups and individuals.

Dated; October 9, 1997.

Hal Salwasser,

Regional Forester.

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