



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Jodi Kramer (Idaho Panhandle NF)
(208) 765-7235
Willie Sykes (Kootenai NF)
(406) 283-7694

PUBLIC INPUT SOUGHT FOR FOREST PLAN REVISION

LIBBY, MT and COEUR D'ALENE, ID -- The Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests are moving forward towards revising their Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans). A Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on April 30, 2002, which officially starts the public involvement or “scoping” phase.

The current forest plans are near the end of their intended 15-year life as both plans were approved in 1987. These plans need to be revised to reflect resource and social changes as well as new scientific information on both forests. This will provide up-to-date management direction for the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests for a 10-15 year period after the plans are revised. The two forests are working together on this large-scale planning effort because they share many common issues and resource similarities.

Ranotta McNair, Forest Supervisor on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest believes that “the Forest Service faces a substantial challenge in revising these forest plans and that public participation is essential to its success”. Over the next couple of years, she encourages everyone to “share their thoughts and ideas on what they want from these public lands and ask that they participate openly in developing a common vision, for the future of both the Idaho Panhandle and Kootenai National Forests”.

The scoping process, which will continue through December 1, 2002, is the first opportunity for the public, Tribes, states, elected officials, and other agencies to work together with the Forest Service in identifying the most significant issues to be considered in revising the forest plans. The intent is to focus this large-scale planning effort on the needs of the land and the people. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will follow and is scheduled to be released approximately the end of 2003. A 90-day comment period will follow the release of the DEIS. By April of 2005, a final EIS will be completed and each forest is scheduled to complete a Record of Decision and revised Forest Plan. While there are several formal comment periods, the Forest Service encourages public involvement throughout the entire process.

The forests have identified “preliminary” revision topics/issues, which were developed from years of monitoring and evaluation reports, current science and assessments, public comment on

previous projects, and input from Forest Service employees. These issues span such areas as recreation access and road management, sustainable vegetation and wildlife management, sustainable timber production, clean water, and economic issues in the communities.

We intend to use a variety of methods for sharing information and engaging the public throughout the revision process and will include such products as periodic newsletters, news releases and articles, and public meetings. The Forest Service Plan Revision Team strongly encourages the public to obtain the most current information through the forests' websites at www.fs.fed.us/r1/kootenai and www.fs.fed.us/r1/ipnf.

Open House information meetings have been scheduled in local communities of the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests. "We are encouraging the public to attend any of the following open houses, to better understand the forest plan revision process and list of preliminary issues, and to also share their thoughts and ideas", states Bob Castaneda, Forest Supervisor on the Kootenai National Forest. The meetings will be informal with Forest Service personnel available to answer individual questions.

The following series of Open House information meetings are scheduled for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest:

Location	Date	Time
Sandpoint, ID – Ranger District Office, 1500 Highway 2	June 5, 2002	4:00 – 7:00 pm
Silverton, ID – Ranger District Office	June 6, 2002	4:00 – 7:00 pm
Priest Lake, ID – Priest Lake Elementary School	June 10, 2002	4:00 – 7:00 pm
St. Maries, ID – St. Maries High School Cafeteria	June 11, 2002	4:00 – 7:00 pm
Coeur d'Alene, ID – Supervisors Office, 3815 Schreiber Way	June 12, 2002	4:00 – 7:00 pm
Bonnors Ferry, ID – Location to be announced	June 13, 2002	4:00 – 7:00 pm
Priest River, ID – Priest River Jr. High	June 17, 2002	4:00 – 7:00 pm
Moscow, ID – University Inn Best Western, 1516 Pullman Road	June 19, 2002	4:00 – 7:00 pm
Spokane – Location to be announced	Date to be announced	Time to be announced

All Open House information meetings for the Idaho Panhandle will have a presentation on the forest plan revision process and preliminary revision topics beginning at 5:00 pm. There will be handouts and displays that will also contain this information.

The following series of Open House information meetings are scheduled for the Kootenai National Forest:

Location	Date	Time
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Libby, MT – VFW Hall, 108 West Second St.	June 12, 2002	6:00 – 8:00 pm
Eureka, MT – Lincoln Electric Coop	June 13, 2002	6:00 – 8:00 pm
Noxon, MT – Noxon Emergency Services Building	June 17, 2002	6:00 – 8:00 pm
Troy, MT – Troy Ranger Station, US Highway 2	June 18, 2002	6:00 – 8:00 pm

All Open House information meetings for the Kootenai will have a presentation on the forest plan revision process and preliminary revision topics beginning at 6:00 pm. There will be handouts and displays that will also contain this information.

If you have any questions, please contact Jodi DeHerrera on the IdahoPanhandle at (208) 765-7235, or Willie Sykes on the Kootenai at (406) 283-7694.

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