



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Los Padres
National Forest

Supervisor's Office
6755 Hollister Ave., Suite 150
Goleta, CA 93117
(805) 968-6640
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File Code: 1950

Date: October 5, 2009

Dear Interested Party,

The US Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) is seeking public comment on the Proposed Action to construct a new Forest Headquarters (Supervisor's Office) on National Forest System Lands adjacent to the existing Administrative Office for the Santa Lucia Ranger District. The existing Supervisor's Office is currently located at 6755 Hollister Avenue, Suite 150, Goleta, California and is not government owned. The proposed project area is located at 1616 North Carlotti Drive in Santa Maria, California. For a more detailed description of the Proposed Action, Purpose and Need, and the nature of the decision to be made, please refer to the enclosure.

This public comment period is the scoping stage under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The formal scoping period will end 30 days from the date of this letter. If you would like more information on this project, please contact Forest Recreation, Lands, and Engineering Staff Officer Bruce Emmens at 805-961-5734. If you have information you feel the Forest Service may not be aware of, or if you have constructive ideas regarding potential effects of the proposal, please send your comments in writing to comments-pacificsouthwest-los-padres-so@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

PEGGY HERNANDEZ
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure



Proposed Action

The proposed action includes the following:

- Removal of the existing administrative office for the Santa Lucia Ranger District
- Design and construct a new office building (approximately 20,000 square ft.)
- Locate temporary office space during construction for affected employees

The new building construction will have appurtenant site development, such as delineating, re-paving and striping separate public, employee and government vehicle parking and installation of new security fencing and gates to separate public from non-public areas. Landscaping around the buildings and parking areas will consist of native and drought-resistant plants, which will require little or no water. Project design and construction are expected to begin once funding is secured for the project. A decision from the National Headquarters of the USDA Forest Service (Washington Office) is expected in 2009.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for the proposed action is to:

1. Replace outdated existing space into an efficient space for office staff and public interaction;
2. Comply with Forest Service architectural guidelines;
3. Meet “Silver” LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) requirements as set by the US Green Building Council;
4. Incorporate elements of the local community design standards.

An earlier decision was made to relocate the Supervisor’s Office to the present Santa Lucia Ranger District Office location and adjoining acquired lands for two overriding reasons: to obtain adequate, affordable office space, and to improve the ability to recruit and retain well qualified forest employees.

Background Information

The Los Padres National Forest Supervisor’s Office (SO) provides overall management and specialist services to the five Ranger Districts comprising the Forest. Currently, the Supervisor’s Office is located in high-cost leased facilities in Goleta near the Santa Barbara Airport. In 2006, a land exchange traded valuable property in downtown Ojai for a parcel adjacent to the existing Santa Lucia Ranger Station in Santa Maria. The number one Forest priority is to construct a new Supervisor’s Office on the parcel. The building as presently planned will include new offices for the District and the Emergency Command Center as well.

Washington Office, Regional Office, and Forest primary management direction is to provide safe, clean, attractive, efficient and accessible facilities for all permanent and temporary employees and to provide service to the public, while reducing fixed costs through consolidation of facilities and decommissioning of unneeded buildings and administrative sites. The project proposal is consistent with the Forest Plan direction as described in Part 2, Buildings, Grounds

and Utilities (pages 28 & 29) and Appendix B - Program Strategies and Tactics, Fac 1 Facilities Maintenance Backlog (page 133).

Decision to be made

The decision to be made is whether to proceed with the proposed action as proposed, with modifications, or not at all (No Action Alternative).

Public Involvement

This project has been published in the Schedule of Proposed Actions for the Los Padres National Forest since July 1, 2009. Comments received in response to this request, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record of this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Scoping comments should be as specific as possible in order for the Forest Service to identify and consider each issue or concern. Upon completion of the environmental analysis, an opportunity to comment will be provided to those who respond to the scoping letter.