

Attachment 2E(1)

Explanatory Note for Forest Service Report August 2, 2010

Pursuant to the Office of Management and Budget's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 (ARRA) implementation guidance, appendix 7, and the Council on Environmental Quality's guidance as updated, the Forest Service submits this Section 1609(c) report for activity through June 30, 2010.

This report updates and clarifies the fifth report and addresses the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work necessary for ARRA Division A funded projects and activities that will use over 90 percent of the funds appropriated.

As of June 30, 2010, the Forest Service continues to identify 705 ARRA funded projects. A "project" as defined for ARRA budgeting/accounting purposes does not always align with the "project" as defined for NEPA purposes. In this case, the ARRA "project" is a combination of many component "projects" (subprojects) that have independent utility and are individually analyzed under NEPA. This results in fewer ARRA funded projects being reported than the number of NEPA actions.

During this reporting period, with adjustments to the quantity of NEPA actions for some existing projects, a net of 30 additional NEPA actions are reported. These changes are explained in detail below.

NEPA Not Applicable (N/A NEPA): There are no changes from the previous report.

Updates to the previous report:

- Project #122, field units determined that the three pending EAs were no longer necessary, as the work covered by the project EA completed on November 5, 2009 would accommodate the obligated funding for this project. Project #302, due to miscommunication, it had been assumed the project continued to be under development. Instead, the project consisted of 35 categorical exclusions (CEs), which were completed December 1, 2009.
- Project #380, consolidated three EAs into one EA, a net reduction of two EAs.

New Information for this report:

- Three NEPA actions remain pending from the last report; two CEs and one EA. This was reduced from the last report of 29 pending actions.
 - One CE is waiting for snow melt to check for extraordinary circumstances and is expected to be completed in July 2010.
 - One CE is being discussed with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for extraordinary circumstances and is expected to be completed in July 2010.
 - One EA is out for public comment and expected to be completed August, 2010.

- CEs have been completed for the following projects.
 - One CE for each of projects #61, #102, #415, #418, #503, and #505.
 - Six CEs for project #420.
 - Thirty-five CEs for project #302.
- EAs have been completed for the following projects.
 - One EA for each of projects #178, #379, and #380.
 - Two EAs for project #207.
 - Three EAs for project #284.

Benefits of the NEPA process: After several decades of implementing NEPA, the Agency sees the greatest benefit of the Act is its requirement to use a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to decision-making, which includes involving the public. Public involvement has always been a critical element to the Agency as a means to add to the level of information about the possible environmental and social effects of a project. Because of NEPA's systematic approach, environmental and social effects, findings required by various environmental statutes, and public input are considered together during decision-making.

The following examples show how public involvement can enhance decision-making.

1. CIM-0104-04R; Lakeview-Reeder Roads; environmental impact statement (EIS)
(project #101)

This project entailed road maintenance, reconstruction and new road construction in an area where the endangered species boreal toad exists. The road reconstruction will improve fish passage and reduce sedimentation in the area. Through public comment on the draft EIS, a public comment identified a discrepancy regarding a buffer zone for the protection of the boreal toad. The road was redesigned to account for the discrepancy.

2. CIM-0811-09T; Roan Mountain Facilities Maintenance; CE (project #326)

This project entailed repaving existing trails and repaving a parking area and access road. During the scoping process individuals requested the use of porous pavement be considered to reduce rain runoff. The use of porous pavement requires a 1.2 meter minimum clearance from the bottom of the paved surface to bedrock (EPA Fact Sheet 1999). Since bedrock at the site is 6-12 inches, the use of porous pavement is not feasible without major site preparation. The NEPA process allowed the public to better understand why an alternative action that appeared to be environmentally friendly was not pursued.

3. WFM-0202-14HF; Babione Vegetation Management Project; EA (project #379)

This vegetation management project was designed to conduct various vegetation treatments to reduce hazardous fuels and restore forest health. Through the public involvement process the Agency worked with adjacent landowners to address concerns that on-the-ground activities could lead to increased trespass on their private land. In order to alleviate the concern and still meet the project's purpose, several design elements were incorporated.

4. WFM-0412-01HF; Crooked River Vegetation Management Project; CE (project #47)

This vegetation management project was designed to conduct various vegetation treatments to reduce hazardous fuels and restore forest health. The Agency identified the State of

Idaho's Department of Fish and Game as a cooperating agency. The state brought forward new information on flammulated owl habitat, which led to deferred treatment on approximately 55 acres.

5. **WFM-0521-1; Butler II/Slide Post-Fire Fuels Reduction Project; EA** (project #8)
This vegetation management project was designed to protect adjacent communities from the risk of future high-intensity wildfire and provide a safe environment for work crews. Two special interest groups objected to the project as designed. The Forest Service met with the groups and found resolution. Both groups were brought into the implementation monitoring to ensure their concerns were addressed.
6. **CIM-0100-01T; Trail Construction and Reroutes, 2010; CE** (project #204)
This project entails the construction of hiking trails to improve recreational experiences. The process revealed that the public held differing opinions on whether one segment of a proposed trail should be designated as motorized or non-motorized. To address the concerns, the responsible official decided to remove the trail segment from consideration and address the issue during the upcoming travel management analysis process.
7. **CIM-1005-1R10, Access and Travel Management, EA** (project #2)
This project entails access and travel management analysis to determine how the road system on the Sitka Ranger District will be managed. The process revealed that many local residents favored leaving all, or nearly all roads open. A few comments favored closing roads to protect water quality, fish habitat, and old-growth reserves. In considering the competing goals, the responsible official determined that hard choices had to be made. Roads with unacceptable impacts were closed while those with no or limited impacts were left open. The ranger district will pursue partnerships to facilitate improved access, including adopt-a-road agreements to maintain roads.
8. **CIM-1005-4T, George Island World War II Cannon Trail, CE** (project #365)
This project entails the reconstruction/realignment of a gravel-surfaced trail and construction of associated developments. The project originally called for obtaining gravel for the trail surface by excavating a high-wave energy beach. Gravel removal from the beach was the largest concern for many people and state agencies. While using gravel from the beach would have had less overall environmental impacts the responsible official, in response to the public decided to barge gravel to the island.
9. **WFM-0200-1, Arapaho National Recreation Area Forest Health Project, EIS** (project #13)
This vegetation management project was designed to protect adjacent communities from the risk of future high-intensity wildfire due to a mountain pine beetle infestation. Because portions of the proposed action were in inventoried roadless areas and litigation continues on the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, the responsible official deferred taking action on those areas within the inventoried roadless area.

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