Attachment 2E(1)

Explanatory Note for USDA Forest Service Report (USFS)
May 2, 2011

This report reflects the NEPA status of Forest Service projects and activities funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 (ARRA) through the period ending March 31, 2011.

This report is the same as the eighth report addressing the NEPA work necessary for ARRA Division A funded projects and activities that will use over 90 percent of the funds appropriated.

As of March 31, 2011, 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.

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

Updates to the previous report: No updates to previous report.

New Information for this report: No new information.

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.

The Environmental Impact Statement prepared by the Forest Service for the Lakeview-Reeder Roads project in Idaho, analyzed road maintenance reconstruction and new road construction in an area where the endangered boreal toad species exists. The project was intended to improve fish passage and reduce sedimentation in the area. Through public review of 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 provide an adequate buffer to protect the species.

The Forest Service funded a Roan Mountain, North Carolina Facilities Maintenance project to repave existing trails, a parking area, and an 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 47 inch minimum clearance from the bottom of the paved surface to bedrock an in response to the scoping comments studies found the bedrock at the site is 6-12 inches below the surface. The NEPA process allowed the public to better understand why an alternative action that appeared to be environmentally friendly was not pursued.

The Forest Service Babione Vegetation Management Project in Bighorn National Forest, Wyoming, 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 this concern and still meet the project's purpose several design elements were incorporated to address the landowners concerns.

The Forest Service funded Vegetation Management Project on Crooked River, Idaho 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 modified the acres treated and protected the habitat.

The Forest Service Butler II/Slide Post-Fire Fuels Reduction Project in the San Bernardino Forest, California, is a vegetation management project designed to protect adjacent communities from the risk of future high-intensity wildfire and provide a safe environment for work crews. Two organizations objected to the project as designed. During the EA process, the forest met with the groups and found resolution. Both groups were also brought into the implementation monitoring to ensure their concerns were addressed

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.

The analysis of access and travel management in the Tongass National Forest, Sitka Ranger District assisted the Forest Service in determining how the road system on the Sitka Ranger District will be managed. The NEPA process revealed that many local residents favored leaving all or nearly all roads open, while a number of residents favored closing roads to protect water quality, fish habitat, and old-growth forest reserves. In considering the competing positions, the responsible official determined that hard choices had to be made. The Ranger closed roads where use would have unacceptable impacts on resources and left open roads where use would have no or limited impacts. The ranger district will pursue partnerships to facilitate improved access, including adopt-a-road agreements to maintain roads.

1. **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.

2. **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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