

## ALERT: ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS AND PUBLIC RIGHT TO COMMENT ON NATIONAL FOREST PLANS THREATENED BY BUSH PROPOSALS!

The U.S. Forest Service, under the Bush administration, is attempting, through the rulemaking process, to radically change the way in which the National Forest system makes management decisions. If the administration implements all of its proposed draft rules, then most management decisions – everything from forest plan revisions to logging proposals – will be exempt from environmental impact studies and public comment. WE NEED YOUR HELP TO STOP THIS! Your comments are needed by March 6, 2003

Perhaps the most extreme of the proposals is the new "National Forest Management Act" regulations. These regulations govern how national forests develop new forest plans. Most of our national forests, including Shawnee National Forest, are in the process of writing new forest management plans. The planning process will be governed by the new regulations. Some of the major points in the planning regulations that we disagree with and we urge you to oppose are:

1. The new regulations propose to allow a national forest to use a legal loophole in the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to avoid preparing environmental impact studies and taking public comment on the entire revisions of forest plans. This flies in the face of 20 years of national forest policy that required such studies and repeated public involvement in forest plan development.
2. The new regulations do away with the current strict requirement that national forests provide sufficient habitat to maintain "minimum viable populations" of native vertebrate species. Instead, the new regulations provide loopholes for this requirement which have the effect of gutting them. These loopholes will allow species such as the Cerulean Warbler or Red Shouldered Hawk, which are not yet federally listed, to lose their protective status in national forests. This will drive them to federal listing faster than if the national forest system is required to protect their habitat prior to listing.
3. The new regulations allow for "interim forest plan amendments" that could be put in place for four years without public comment. This dangerous regulation could allow for a series of environmentally damaging projects through "interim" forest plan amendments without any environmental impact studies or public comment.
4. The new regulations provide a loophole where a national forest can approve and implement projects that are inconsistent with a current forest plan.
5. Finally, the new regulations only give parties 30 days to review final forest plans and file administrative objections to the plan. As plans are often hundreds of pages, this puts a heavy burden on reviewers to drop everything they are doing at the time and review these plans.

When these regulations are added to proposals to create new loopholes to do timber sales, prescribed burning, road building, approval of ORV trails, and other questionable management activities without environmental studies and public involvement, it becomes clear what this administration's interests are – to allow industry to exploit our national forests to the maximum while keeping public opposition to a minimum.

Please send your comments on these proposed regulations. Send written comments to: USDA FS Planning Rule, Content Analysis Team, P.O. Box 8359, Missoula, MT 59807; via [mailto:planning\\_rule@fs.fed.us](mailto:planning_rule@fs.fed.us) ; or by FAX: Planning Rule Comments at (406) 329-3556. Comments are due by March 6, 2003.

Original alert material provided by Mark Donham ☞

## Sierra Club Board Passes Iraqi Aggression Resolution

"The Sierra Club is concerned about the global dangers presented by possible Iraqi aggression and about the dire environmental consequences of war. The Sierra Club supports disarming Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. The Sierra Club commends the US and the other United Nations Security Council members for their unanimous resolution calling for the restoration of the disarmament inspections process as a means of achieving a peaceful resolution of the Iraq issue, and it urges all nations to work through the UN to achieve this objective. The process of inspection should go forward immediately, and pursuant to, international consensus as expressed in the UN Security Council resolution.

Even if the UN succeeds, however, this process will be incomplete if the US and other nations fail to recognize that their continued dependence on oil and other fossil fuels is, itself, a significant de-stabilizing influence in international affairs. The Sierra Club therefore reaffirms its urgent call for the US to move to a clean energy economy, greater efficiency, and use of renewable sources of energy."