



File Code: 1950
Date: December 21, 2020

Dear Interested Party,

The Bitterroot National Forest will be preparing a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the Gold Butterfly Project. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare this SEIS was published in the Federal Register on December 15, 2020. A copy of the Notice of Intent can be found on the Gold Butterfly Project SEIS webpage at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59262>.

The purpose and need for the supplemental environmental impact statement is to analyze a project-specific Forest Plan amendment related to the management of old-growth. The project-specific amendment would change the definition of old-growth to be consistent with old-growth definitions outlined in "Old-Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region" (Green et. al).

When proposing a Forest Plan amendment, the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219), as amended, requires the responsible official to provide in the initial notice about the amendment "which substantive requirements of §§ 219.8 through 219.11 are likely to be directly related to the amendment (§ 219.13(b)(5)) ..." Whether a rule provision is likely to be directly related to an amendment is determined by the purpose for and the effects of the amendment, and informed by the best available scientific information, effects analysis, monitoring data or other rationale. Based on the proposed amendment and requirement of the planning rule, the following substantive requirements of the 36 CFR 219 planning regulations would likely be directly related to the proposed amendments: § 219.9 Diversity of plant and animal communities.

The supplemental environmental impact statement assessment will conform to the procedural regulations for the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR sections 1500 to 1508, published by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in 1978. The CEQ issued revised regulations for these procedural requirements, effective September 14, 2020. The revised regulations provide the responsible project official the option of conducting an environmental analysis under the 1978 regulations if the process was initiated before September 14, 2020. Because the Gold Butterfly Project was developed before September 14, 2020, the responsible official has elected to follow the 1978 procedural requirements for NEPA.

We anticipate the supplemental environmental impact statement will be available for public comment in February 2020. We will keep you informed as we move through this process.

Sincerely,

X Matt Anderson

Signed by: MATTHEW ANDERSON
MATTHEW ANDERSON
Forest Supervisor

