United States Department of Agriculture
Office of the Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20250

TO: Victoria Christiansen, Chief, USDA Forest Service

FROM: Chris French, Acting Deputy Under Secretary

DATE: February 01, 2021

SUBJECT: Instructions for Agency Action Reviews

Pursuant to 7 CFR §§ 2.7 and 2.12, this memorandum issues instructions by the Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) for conducting a review of certain pending programmatic and project land management decisions. This review will afford an opportunity to assess applicable facts, law and policy in order to ensure that agency actions are aligned with Administration priorities as identified in recent Executive Orders and assist the Forest Service in fulfilling its multiple-use, sustained-yield mission in its stewardship of the National Forest System.

The Forest Service shall submit for NRE's review all projects and activities that fall within the categories set out below by February 12, 2021. Consistent with applicable law, and subject to any exception expressly authorized by NRE, the Forest Service will defer making any final decision regarding the actions listed below until NRE has reviewed the decision and authorized the agency to proceed with decision-making.

These instructions are applicable to the classes of plans, projects and activities listed below for which the Forest Service expects or intends to make a decision prior to March 31, 2021:

- Activities in designated wilderness areas taken pursuant to Sections 4(c) and 4(d) of the Wilderness Act.
- Road construction, road reconstruction and timber harvesting activities on lands originally designated pursuant to 36 CFR 294, subpart B (2001) as well as any roadless lands designated in a subsequent roadless rulemaking.
- Special Use Authorizations (and any Forest Plan amendments) involving new construction or expansion of infrastructure for conventional energy production, including pipelines or transmission lines.
- New, modified, or expanded locatable or leasable minerals activities involving ground disturbance on greater than 500 acres.
- Activities involving cutting or removal of more than 3,000 acres of vegetation that will be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.
- Final decisions for revisions or significant amendments of Land Management Plans.

Agency actions should be submitted for review in summary form with a brief description of the purpose and need, the intended selected action, significant effects to natural or social resources, and public involvement including with State, local and Tribal governments, and status of any objection process underway. The summary should include any legal or administrative timelines, including those associated with permit renewal.

The Acting Deputy Undersecretary may issue further instructions that supersede these instructions, in whole or in part, and may extend the review period timeframe as deemed necessary or appropriate.