



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Huron-Manistee National Forests
Manistee Ranger Station
412 Red Apple Road
Manistee, MI 49660

231-723-2211 (Voice)
231-723-8642(Fax)
231-723-0124(TTY)

File Code: 1950/2800

Date: December 2, 2008

Dear Interested Parties:

On June 11, 2008, the Forest Service received a Notice of Intent and authorization to conduct Oil and Gas Geophysical Exploration Operations on National Forest System lands from Great Lakes Geophysical, Inc. The Cadillac-Manistee Ranger District of the Huron-Manistee National Forests is preparing an environmental analysis for the authorization of a short-term (one year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical special use authorization to Great Lakes Geophysical, Inc. to conduct a 3-D seismic survey across approximately 6 square miles of National Forest System land in T20N, R17W, Sections 5-8, 17-20; and T20N, R18W, Sections 12, 13, and 24, Grant Twp, Michigan (see attached map). Seismic cables and geophones (sensors) would be placed on the ground in a straight line, the line would be connected to a recording truck, shot holes would be used as the energy sources, and upon detonation of these energy sources, the recording truck would record geophysical data. After completion of the seismic survey all survey cable, flagging, and pin flags would be gathered up, and disposed of accordingly. Any permit would be limited to authorizing activities **only** on National Forest System lands.

This project proposal is similar to previous seismic exploration projects which have occurred on the Huron-Manistee National Forests and for which there are no known adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative effects. A proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in environmental impact statements or environmental assessments only if there are no extraordinary circumstances in accordance with Chapter 30 of Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 and if the actions are within one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, Sections 31.1 or 31.2. The seismic activity would not impact wetlands or floodplains, Congressionally designated areas, RNAs, threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, or religious or cultural sites because protection to these areas will be incorporated into the Terms and Conditions the special use authorization.

This proposal falls under Categorical Exclusion 31.2(8) that includes "Short-term (one year or less), mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road (Service Level D, FSH 7709.56), or use and minor repair of existing roads."

A recent court order (*Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck*, CIV F-03-6386 JKS) required that opportunity for public comment be provided on certain Forest Service decisions using categorical exclusions. We are providing that opportunity for this project, via this notice. This scoping opportunity is also the 30-day comment period to establish standing under a Forest Service administrative appeal regulation. To have standing to appeal a decision resulting from this analysis a commenter must submit timely comments on the proposed actions to the deciding official during this 30-day comment period beginning upon publication of the legal notice in the *Manistee News Advocate*.

Your comments must be within the scope of the proposed action, specific to the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider in the decision. Comments should enhance the project analysis and provide meaningful and useful information about your concerns.



How to Comment

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments on this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the *Manistee News Advocate*.

Written comments must be submitted to: John Hojnowski, U.S. Forest Service, 412 Red Apple Road, Manistee, MI 49660, ext. 3105, or by fax (231) 723-8642, or email at jhojnowski@fs.fed.us. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., M-F, excluding holidays.

Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone to Jim A. Thompson (231) 723-2211 or in person at 412 Red Apple Road, Manistee, MI 49660, or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments on the Notice of Intent and Authorization to Conduct Oil and Gas Geophysical Exploration Operations.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text (.rtf), Word (.doc) or Portable Document Format (.pdf). Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

Appeal Eligibility

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who provide comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the following information:

1. Name and address;
2. Title of the proposed action;
3. Specific comments (see 36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;
4. Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility;
5. For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
6. Individual members of organizations must submit their own comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual; comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

If you have any questions or you need further information, please contact John Hojnowski at the Manistee Ranger Station at (231) 723-2211 extension 3105, 412 Red Apple Road, Manistee, MI 49660.

Sincerely,

/s/ JIM A. THOMPSON
District Ranger

Enclosure

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is an equal opportunity provider and employer.