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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PROPOSES CHANGES IN INDIAN FORESTRY REGULATIONS

Legislative authority for sustained yield management of Indian forest lands and more judicious procedures for sale of Indian timber are incorporated in proposed regulations announced today by the Department of the Interior. The changes would conform to Public Law 88-301, enacted April 30, 1964.

The sustained-yield principle involves the harvesting of timber in line with replacement growth rates so that the forest resources are conserved, maintained, and improved. The proposed provisions would broaden the concept of management on tribal land to include modern silvicultural practices for harvesting other than mature and dead timber to accentuate the growth and increase values of the residual stand.

The proposed rules would also simplify procedures governing sale of timber from individually owned allotted land, and place foremost as objectives the needs and best interests of the Indian owner and his heirs. Factors to be weighed include the state of growth of the timber, the need for maintaining and increasing productive capacity of the land, the advisability of diverting land use to other than growing timber, and the present and future financial needs of the owner and his heirs.

Other proposed amendments to the regulations are also directed toward timber sales on allotted Indian lands. They would grant the Secretary of the Interior the following authority: to approve the sale of timber from allotted lands without the consent of the owners where such action is necessary to prevent loss of values resulting from fires, insects, disease, windthrow, and other natural catastrophes; to permit the sale of timber with the consent of a majority of Indian interest instead of the total interest; to act for persons who cannot be located after a reasonable and diligent search; and to protect the interests of persons whose ownership in a decedent's estate has not been determined and for minors and others who are incompetent by reason of mental incapacity.

The proposed rule changes would also grant authority to the Secretary to handle the sale of timber in the inseparable undivided interests in allotments which are sometimes inherited by non-Indians. With the consent of such unrestricted interests they may now be included in timber sales along with the restricted Indian interests.

The full text of the proposed regulations is being published in the Federal Register. Interested persons may submit written comments, suggestions, or objections to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C. 20240, within thirty days of the date of publication.

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