Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Indian forest land owners would for the first time have a right of appeal from Indian Bureau decisions on their timber sale contracts under a proposed revision of Federal Regulations announced today by the Department of the Interior.

The proposal include many changes. They would permit any legally interested party to appeal on sale contracts to the Secretary of the Interior. The existing regulations do not specify such an appeal procedure.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs said the revisions also include these five other major changes:

1. For the first time it would be a stated goal of Indian forest management to preserve and develop grazing, wildlife and other values to the extent it would be in the best interests of the Indian landowners.
2. A sustained yield of timber would continue to be emphasized. However, Indian lands requiring such management would be defined for the first time as lands chiefly valuable for forest crop production or on which a forest cover is needed to protect watershed or other values. Lands better suited for farming or other purposes would not be included.
3. A number of detailed changes would be made in the sales procedures to bring them into greater conformity with those of the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.
4. The revised regulations would make it easier for the Indian owner of a forested tract to cut and sell timber from his own land. Under the present rules .Indian owners are allowed to cut timber for their own use but not for sale.
5. The new rules would also liberalize the cutting of small quantities of timber from Indian lands under permit rather than formal contract. The value of the timber that may be cut under permit in anyone year would be increased from $100 to $200.

About 13,500,000 acres of forested land on Indian reservations, primarily in the Pacific Coast, Rocky Mountain and Lake states, would be affected by the proposed changes. This includes nearly 6,000,000 acres of Indian forest land that is commercially important.

The proposed revision was published in the Federal Register on November 27. Interested parties have until December 27 to submit their views, data and arguments to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Washington 25, D. C.