

BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC
Form S-3ASR
August 16, 2006

[QuickLinks](#) -- Click here to rapidly navigate through this document

As filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on August 16, 2006

Registration No. 333-[]

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM S-3

REGISTRATION STATEMENT
UNDER
THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933

THE BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC.

(Exact Name of Registrant as Specified in its Charter)

Delaware
(State or Other Jurisdiction of
Incorporation or Organization)

13-3286161
(I.R.S. Employer
Identification No.)

**383 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10179
(212) 272-2000**

(Address, including Zip Code, and Telephone Number,
including Area Code, of Registrant's Principal Executive Offices)

**Samuel L. Molinaro Jr.
Executive Vice President and
Chief Financial Officer
The Bear Stearns Companies Inc.
383 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10179
(212) 272-2000**

(Name, Address, including Zip Code, and Telephone Number,
including Area Code, of Agent for Service)

Copies to:

**Dennis J. Block, Esq.
Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP
One World Financial Center
New York, New York 10281
(212) 504-6000**

Approximate date of commencement of proposed sale to public: From time to time after the effective date of this Registration Statement as determined by market conditions.

If the only securities being registered on this Form are being offered pursuant to dividend or interest reinvestment plans, please check the following box.

If any of the securities being registered on this Form are to be offered on a delayed or continuous basis pursuant to Rule 415 under the Securities Act of 1933, other than securities offered only in connection with dividend or interest reinvestment plans, check the following box.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

If this Form is filed to register additional securities for an offering pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act, please check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering.

If this Form is a post-effective amendment filed pursuant to Rule 462(c) under the Securities Act, check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering.

If this Form is a registration statement pursuant to General Instruction I.D. or a post-effective amendment thereto that shall become effective upon filing with the Commission pursuant to Rule 462(e) under the Securities Act, check the following box.

If this Form is a post-effective amendment to a registration statement filed pursuant to General Instruction I.D. filed to register additional securities or additional classes of securities pursuant to Rule 413(b) under the Securities Act, check the following box.

CALCULATION OF REGISTRATION FEE

Title of Each Class of Securities to be Registered	Amount to be Registered	Proposed Maximum Offering Price Per Unit(1)	Proposed Maximum Aggregate Offering Price	Amount of Registration Fee
Debt Securities(2)				
Warrants				
Preferred Stock				
Depository Shares(3)				
Purchase Contracts				
Units (4)				

(1) An indeterminate aggregate initial offering price or number of securities of each identified class is being registered as may from time to time be issued at indeterminate prices. In accordance with Rules 456(b) and 457(r), the Registrant is deferring payment of all the registration fee, except for \$5,000 that has already been paid and may be offset pursuant to Rule 457(p) for fees paid with respect to \$51,000,000 aggregate initial offering price of securities that were previously registered pursuant to Registration Statement No. 333-121744, declared effective on February 2, 2005, and were not sold thereunder. Registration Statement No. 333-121744 is hereby withdrawn. In connection with the securities offered hereby, except as specified in the previous sentence, the Registrant will pay "pay-as-you-go registration fees" in accordance with Rule 456(b).

(2) In U.S. dollars or their equivalent in one or more foreign or composite currencies.

(3) Separate consideration may or may not be received for securities that are issuable on exercise, conversion or exchange of other securities or that are issued in units or represented by the depository shares. Depository receipts evidencing the depository shares will be issued pursuant to a deposit agreement.

(4) Each unit will be issued under a unit agreement and will represent an interest in two or more securities of any identified class or a combination thereof which may or may not be separable from one another.

The Registrant hereby amends this Registration Statement on such date or dates as may be necessary to delay its effective date until the Registrant shall file a further amendment which specifically states that this Registration Statement shall thereafter become effective in accordance with Section 8(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 or until the Registration Statement shall become effective on such date as the Commission, acting pursuant to Section 8(a), may determine.

PROSPECTUS

The Bear Stearns Companies Inc.

**Debt Securities
Warrants
Preferred Stock
Depository Shares
Purchase Contracts
Units**

By this prospectus, we intend to offer at one or more times

Debt Securities
Warrants
Preferred Stock
Depository Shares
Purchase Contracts
Units

in one or more series with an indeterminate aggregate initial public offering price (as described in the applicable prospectus supplement).

We will provide the specific terms of these securities in supplements to this prospectus. You should read this prospectus and any supplements carefully before you invest in the securities.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the adequacy or accuracy of this prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

We may use this prospectus in the initial sale of these securities. In addition, Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc. or any of our other affiliates may use this prospectus in a market-making transaction in any of these or similar securities after their initial sale. **Unless we or our agent inform the purchaser otherwise in the confirmation of sale, this prospectus is being used in a market-making transaction.**

Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc.

Prospectus dated August 16, 2006.

The information contained in this prospectus is not complete and may be changed. You should only rely on the information incorporated by reference or provided in this prospectus or any supplement to this prospectus. We have not authorized anyone else to provide you with different information. These securities are not being offered in any state where the offer is not permitted. You should not assume that the information in this prospectus or any supplement to this prospectus is accurate as of any date other than the date on the front of those documents.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION	1
THE BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC.	2
USE OF PROCEEDS	4
DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES	4
DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS	16
DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK	21
DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITARY SHARES	25
DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASE CONTRACTS	28
DESCRIPTION OF UNITS	31
BOOK-ENTRY PROCEDURES AND SETTLEMENT	33
LIMITATIONS ON ISSUANCE OF BEARER DEBT SECURITIES AND BEARER WARRANTS	43
PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION	44
ERISA CONSIDERATIONS	48
LEGAL MATTERS	49
EXPERTS	49

Offers and sales of the securities are subject to restrictions in certain jurisdictions. The distribution of this prospectus and the offer or sale of the securities in certain jurisdictions may be restricted by law. Persons who come into possession of this prospectus or any securities must inform themselves about and observe any applicable restrictions on the distribution of this prospectus and the offer and sale of the securities.

We accept responsibility for the information contained in this prospectus. To the best of our knowledge and belief (having taken all reasonable care to ensure that such is the case) the information contained in this prospectus is in accordance with the facts and does not omit anything likely to affect the import of the information.

You must read this prospectus as one along with all the documents which are deemed to be incorporated in this prospectus by reference (see "Where You Can Find More Information"). This prospectus must be read and construed on the basis that the incorporated documents are so incorporated and form part of this document, except as specified in this document.

We have not authorized any person to give any information or represent anything not contained in this prospectus. You must not rely on any unauthorized information.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file current, annual and quarterly reports, proxy statements and other information required by the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"), with the SEC. You may read and copy any document we file at the SEC's public reference room located at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information about the public reference room. Our SEC filings are also available to the public from the SEC's Internet site at <http://www.sec.gov>. Copies of these reports, proxy statements and other information can also be inspected at the offices of the New York Stock Exchange, Inc., 20 Broad Street, New York, New York 10005.

Our website is <http://www.bearstearns.com>. We make available free of charge on our website, via a link to the SEC's internet site at <http://www.sec.gov>, our annual reports on Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K, proxy statements and Forms 3, 4 and 5 filed on behalf of directors and executive officers and any amendments to those reports filed or furnished pursuant to the Exchange Act as soon as reasonably practicable after such material is electronically filed with, or furnished to, the SEC.

In addition, we currently make available on <http://www.bearstearns.com> our most recent annual report on Form 10-K, our quarterly reports on Form 10-Q for the current fiscal year and our most recent proxy statement, although in some cases these documents are not available on our website as soon as they are available on the SEC's internet site. You will need to have on your computer the Adobe Acrobat Reader software to view these documents, which are in the PDF format.

We have filed with the SEC a registration statement on Form S-3 (the "Registration Statement") under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, with respect to the securities. This prospectus, which constitutes a part of that Registration Statement, does not include all the information contained in that Registration Statement and its exhibits. For further information with respect to the securities, you should consult the Registration Statement and its exhibits.

Statements contained in this prospectus concerning the provisions of any documents are necessarily summaries of those documents, and each statement is qualified in its entirety by reference to the copy of the document filed with the SEC. The Registration Statement and any of its amendments, including exhibits filed as a part of the Registration Statement or an amendment to the Registration Statement, are available for inspection and copying through the entities listed above.

The SEC allows us to "incorporate by reference" the information that we file with them, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to the other information we have filed with the SEC. The information that we incorporate by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus, and information that we file later with the SEC will automatically update and supersede this information.

The following documents filed by us with the SEC pursuant to Section 13 of the Exchange Act (File No. 1-8989) and any future filings under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act made before the termination of the offering are incorporated by reference:

(1) the Annual Report on Form 10-K as amended by Form 10-K/A (including the portions of the Company's Annual Report to Stockholders and Proxy Statement incorporated by reference therein) for the fiscal year ended November 30, 2005 filed with the SEC on February 13, 2006, as amended on Form 10-K/A filed with the SEC on February 22, 2006;

(2) the Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the fiscal quarters ended February 28, 2006 and May 31, 2006; and

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

(3) the Current Reports on Form 8-K dated December 9, 2005, December 15, 2005, December 27, 2005, January 20, 2006, January 25, 2006, March 16, 2006 (two separate reports), June 15, 2006 and June 21, 2006.

We will provide to you without charge, a copy of any or all documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus except the exhibits to those documents (unless they are specifically incorporated by reference in those documents). You may request copies by writing or telephoning us at our Investor Relations Department, The Bear Stearns Companies Inc., 383 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10179, Attn.: Investor Relations, telephone number (212) 272-2000.

THE BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC.

We are a holding company that, through our broker-dealer and international bank subsidiaries, principally Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc. ("Bear Stearns"), Bear, Stearns Securities Corp. ("BSSC"), Bear, Stearns International Limited ("BSIL") and Bear Stearns Bank plc ("BSB"), is a leading investment banking, securities and derivatives trading, clearance and brokerage firm serving corporations, governments, institutional and individual investors worldwide. BSSC, a subsidiary of Bear Stearns, provides professional and correspondent clearing services, in addition to clearing and settling customer transactions and certain of our proprietary transactions. In addition to conducting a substantial portion of our operating activities through certain of our regulated subsidiaries (Bear Stearns, BSSC, BSIL and BSB), we also conduct significant activities through other wholly-owned subsidiaries including: Bear Stearns Global Lending Limited; Custodial Trust Company; Bear Stearns Financial Products Inc.; Bear Stearns Capital Markets Inc.; Bear Stearns Credit Products Inc.; Bear Stearns Forex Inc.; EMC Mortgage Corporation; Bear Stearns Commercial Mortgage Inc and through our majority owned subsidiary Bear Hunter Holdings LLC.

Our business includes:

market-making and trading in U.S. government, government agency, corporate debt and equity, mortgage-related, asset-backed, municipal securities and high yield products;

trading in options, futures, foreign currencies, interest rate swaps and other derivative products;

securities, options and futures brokerage;

providing securities clearance services;

managing equity and fixed income assets for institutional and individual clients;

financing customer activities;

securities lending;

securities and futures arbitrage;

involvement in specialist and market-making activities on the New York Stock Exchange ("NYSE"), American Stock Exchange ("AMEX") and International Securities Exchange ("ISE");

underwriting and distributing securities;

arranging for the private placement of securities;

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

assisting in mergers, acquisitions, restructurings and leveraged transactions;

making principal investments in leveraged acquisitions;

engaging in commercial real estate activities;

investment management and advisory services; and

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

fiduciary, custody, agency and securities research services.

Our business is conducted:

from our principal offices in New York City;

from domestic regional offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Juan and Scottsdale;

from representative offices in Beijing, Hong Kong, Sao Paulo and Shanghai; and

through international offices in Dublin, Hong Kong, London, Lugano, Milan, Singapore and Tokyo.

Our international offices provide services and engage in investment activities involving foreign clients and international transactions. Additionally, certain of these foreign offices provide services to U.S. clients.

Bear Stearns and BSSC are broker-dealers registered with the SEC. Additionally, Bear Stearns is registered as an investment adviser with the SEC. Bear Stearns and/or BSSC are also members of the NYSE, all other principal U.S. securities and futures exchanges, the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. ("NASD"), the National Futures Association and the ISE. Bear Stearns is a "primary dealer" in U.S. government securities as designated by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

BSIL is a full service broker-dealer based in London. BSIL is incorporated in the United Kingdom and is authorized and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

BSB is bank based in the Republic of Ireland, which was registered in 1996 and subsequently granted a banking license on April 10, 1997 under the Irish Central Bank Act, 1971. BSB allows our existing and prospective clients the opportunity of dealing with a banking counterparty. BSB is incorporated in Ireland.

Bear Stearns Global Lending Limited ("BSGL") provides loans to certain Bear Stearns customers. BSGL is incorporated in the Cayman Islands.

Custodial Trust Company ("CTC"), an FDIC insured New Jersey State chartered bank, offers a range of trust, lending and securities-clearance services. CTC provides us with banking powers including access to the securities and funds-wire services of the Federal Reserve System. CTC provides trust, custody, agency and securities lending services for institutional accounts; commercial and margin lending; the clearance of government securities for institutions and dealers; and the processing of mortgage and mortgage-related products, including derivatives and collateralized mortgage obligations products. At November 30, 2005, CTC held approximately \$61 billion of assets for clients, including institutional clients such as pension funds, mutual funds, endowment funds and insurance companies. CTC is incorporated in the State of New Jersey.

Bear Stearns Financial Products Inc. ("BSFP") transacts business as a triple-A-rated counterparty to eligible clients, offering a wide range of fixed income and equity derivative products. Eligible clients are those rated A3 or better by Moody's Investors Service, Inc. and A- or better by Standard & Poor's Ratings Services or counterparties acceptable to both rating agencies. BSFP transfers its market risk associated with derivative transactions to Bear Stearns Capital Markets Inc., an affiliate of BSFP and one of our wholly-owned subsidiaries. BSFP is incorporated in the State of Delaware.

Bear Stearns Capital Markets Inc. ("BSCM") is engaged in fixed income derivatives transactions and hedges associated therewith. BSCM is incorporated in the State of Delaware.

Bear Stearns Credit Products Inc. ("BSCPI") is engaged in credit derivatives transactions and hedges associated therewith. BSCPI is incorporated in the State of Delaware.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

Bear Stearns Forex Inc. ("BSFX") is a foreign exchange dealer engaged in foreign currency transactions and hedges associated therewith. BSFX is incorporated in the State of Delaware.

EMC Mortgage Corporation ("EMC"), is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Freddie MAC approved lender based in Irving, Texas. EMC purchases both conforming and non-conforming, investment-grade and non-investment grade, conventional fixed rate and adjustable rate residential mortgage loans with servicing released or retained and sells such loans to investors. EMC also purchases and sells residual certificates and mortgage servicing rights. EMC is incorporated in the State of Delaware.

Bear Stearns Commercial Mortgage Inc. ("BSCMI") is primarily engaged in the origination and securitization of commercial mortgage loans for resale in the form of pass-through securities ("certificates"). These certificates represent fractional and undivided interests in pools of mortgage loans held in a trust. BSCMI is incorporated in the State of New York.

Bear Hunter Holdings LLC ("BHH") is a Delaware limited liability company jointly owned by us and Hunter Partners LLC. Bear Wagner Specialists LLC, BHH's principal wholly owned subsidiary, is a registered broker dealer primarily engaged in specialist and market-making activities on the NYSE, AMEX and ISE.

We are incorporated in the State of Delaware. Our principal executive office is located at 383 Madison, New York, New York 10179, USA, and our telephone number is (212) 272-2000. Our internet address is <http://www.bearstearns.com>. In this prospectus, the terms "Company," "we," "us" and "our" refer only to The Bear Stearns Companies Inc. excluding its consolidated subsidiaries.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, we intend to use the net proceeds from the sale of our securities for general corporate purposes, which may include additions to working capital, the repayment of short-term and long-term debt and investments in, or extensions of credit to, subsidiaries. Pending such uses, the net proceeds may be temporarily invested in short-term obligations.

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

This section describes certain general terms and provisions of the debt securities to which any prospectus supplement may relate. The particular terms of any debt securities offered by a prospectus supplement and the extent to which these general terms and provisions will not apply to the particular series of debt securities being offered, will be described in the prospectus supplement relating to that particular series of debt securities.

We may issue either senior debt (the "Senior Debt Securities" or "Senior Debt") or senior subordinated debt (the "Subordinated Debt Securities" or "Subordinated Debt"). Senior Debt Securities will be issued under the senior debt indenture dated as of May 31, 1991, as amended (the "Senior Indenture"), between us and JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank), as trustee (the "Trustee"). Subordinated Debt Securities will be issued under the form of subordinated debt indenture filed as an exhibit to the Registration Statement of which this prospectus is a part (the "Subordinated Indenture"). We refer to the Senior Indenture and the Subordinated Indenture individually as an "Indenture" and collectively as the "Indentures."

The terms of the debt securities include those stated in the Indentures and those made part of the Indentures by reference to the TIA. We have filed copies of the Indentures as exhibits to the Registration Statement of which this prospectus forms a part. Copies of the Indentures are available as described under "Where You Can Find More Information."

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

This section, along with the description in the applicable prospectus supplement, is a summary of the material provisions of the Indentures and is not complete. It does not restate the Indentures in their entirety. We urge you to read the Indentures because they, and not these descriptions, define your rights as a holder of debt securities.

Unless otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, the trustee under both the Senior Indenture and the Subordinated Indenture will be JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank).

Because we are a holding company, our rights and the rights of our creditors, including the holders of the debt securities, to participate in the assets of any subsidiary upon the subsidiary's liquidation or reorganization or otherwise would be subject to the prior claims of the subsidiary's creditors, except to the extent that we may be a creditor with recognized claims against such subsidiary.

The Indentures do not limit the aggregate principal amount of debt securities that may be issued. We may issue debt securities in series up to the aggregate principal amount that may be authorized from time to time by us without your consent. The debt securities will be our unsecured obligations. The Senior Debt Securities will rank equally with all of our other unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness. We extend credit to our subsidiaries at various times. Any credit we may extend to our subsidiaries may be subordinated to the claims of unaffiliated creditors of those subsidiaries. The Subordinated Debt Securities will be subordinate in right of payment as described under "Subordination."

General

As of the date of this prospectus, we have issued approximately \$103,755,094,650 aggregate principal amount of Senior Debt Securities under the Senior Indenture, of which \$32,752,155,000 is currently outstanding. As of the date of this prospectus, we have not issued any Subordinated Debt Securities. The Indentures permit us to:

issue debt securities at various times in one or more series;

issue an unlimited principal amount of debt securities;

provide for the issuance of debt securities under the Indentures other than those authorized on the date of this prospectus at various times and without your consent; and

"reopen" a previous issue of a series of debt securities and issue additional debt securities of the series.

Each prospectus supplement will describe the terms of any debt securities we issue, which may include the following:

the title and type of the debt securities, including the subordination provisions, if any, applicable to the debt securities;

the total principal amount of the debt securities;

the minimum denominations;

the percentage of the stated principal amount at which the debt securities will be sold and, if applicable, the method of determining the price;

the person to whom interest is payable, if other than the owner of the debt securities;

the maturity date or dates;

the interest rate or rates, which may be fixed or variable, and the method used to calculate that interest;

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

any index used to determine the amounts of any payments on the debt securities and the manner in which those amounts will be determined;

the interest payment dates, the regular record dates for the interest payment dates, and the date interest will begin to accrue;

the place or places where payments on the debt securities may be made and the place or places where the debt securities may be presented for registration of transfer or exchange;

any date or dates after which the debt securities may be redeemed, repurchased, or repaid in whole or in part at our option or the option of the holder and the periods, prices, terms, and conditions of that redemption, repurchase, or repayment;

any exchange or conversion features;

if other than the full principal amount, the portion of the principal amount of the debt securities that will be payable if their maturity is accelerated;

the currency of principal, any premium, interest, and any other amounts payable on the debt securities, if other than U.S. dollars;

if the debt securities will be issued in other than book-entry form;

the identification of or method of selecting any interest rate calculation agents, exchange rate agents, or any other agents for the debt securities;

any provisions for the discharge of our obligations relating to the debt securities by the deposit of funds or U.S. government obligations;

any provision relating to the extension or renewal of the maturity date of the debt securities;

any applicable U.S. federal income tax consequences;

whether the debt securities will be listed on any securities exchange; and

any other terms of the debt securities, which could be different from those described in this prospectus.

Unless we provide otherwise in an applicable prospectus supplement, we will issue debt securities only in registered form without coupons in denominations of \$1,000 and integral multiples of \$1,000, and in bearer form with or without coupons in the denomination of \$5,000. If we issue bearer debt securities of a series, we will describe the U.S. federal income tax consequences and other special considerations applicable to those bearer debt securities in the prospectus supplement relating to that series.

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement and subject to any limitations in the Indenture, you may transfer or exchange your registered securities at the corporate trust office or agency of the Trustee in the City and State of New York without paying a service charge, other than applicable tax or governmental charges. Bearer debt securities will be transferable by delivery. We will describe the provisions relating to the exchange of bearer debt securities of any series in the prospectus supplement relating to that series.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

If the principal, any premium or interest on the debt securities of any series is payable in a foreign or composite currency, the applicable prospectus supplement will describe any restrictions, elections, U.S. federal income tax consequences, specific terms and other information that apply to those debt securities and the currency.

We may sell one or more series of debt securities at a substantial discount below the stated principal amount, bearing either no interest or interest at a rate that at the time of issuance is below

market rate. One or more series of debt securities may be variable rate debt securities that may be exchanged for fixed rate debt securities. We will describe the U.S. federal income tax consequences and other special considerations applicable to a series in the prospectus supplement relating to that series.

Ranking

The Senior Debt and the Subordinated Debt will be unsecured and will rank equally with all of our other unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness. The Subordinated Debt will be subordinate in right of payment as described under "Subordination." We extend credit to our subsidiaries at various times. Any credit we may extend to our subsidiaries may be subordinated to the claims of unaffiliated creditors of those subsidiaries.

We are a holding company and depend on the earnings and cash flow of our subsidiaries to meet our obligations under the debt securities. Because the creditors of our subsidiaries generally would have a right to receive payment superior to our right to receive payment from the assets of our subsidiaries, the holders of our debt securities will effectively be subordinated to the creditors of our subsidiaries. If we were to liquidate or reorganize, your right to participate in any distribution of our subsidiaries' assets is necessarily subject to the senior claims of the subsidiaries' creditors. Furthermore, the Exchange Act and the rules of certain exchanges and other regulatory bodies, as well as covenants governing certain indebtedness of our subsidiaries, impose net capital requirements on some of our subsidiaries that limit their ability to pay dividends or make loans and advances to us.

Methods of Receiving Payment on the Debt Securities

Registered Debt Securities. Unless we otherwise provide in the applicable prospectus supplement, if the debt securities are in registered form, then the principal, any premium and interest will be payable at the corporate trust office or agency of the Trustee in the City and State of New York.

Interest payments made before maturity or redemption on registered debt securities may be made:

at our option, by check mailed to the address of the person entitled to payment; or

at your option, if you hold at least \$10 million in principal amount of registered debt securities, by wire transfer to an account you have designated in writing at least 16 days before the date on which the payment is due.

Bearer Debt Securities. Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, if the debt securities are in bearer form, then the principal, any premium and interest will be payable at the Trustee's office located outside the United States that is maintained for this purpose. No payment on a bearer debt security will be made by mail to a U.S. address or by wire transfer to an account maintained in the United States, or will otherwise be made inside the United States, unless otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Notices

Registered Debt Securities. Unless otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, any notice given to a holder of a registered debt security will be mailed to the last address of such holder set forth in the applicable security register.

Bearer Debt Securities. Any notice given to a holder of a bearer debt security will be published in a daily newspaper of general circulation in the city or cities specified in the prospectus supplement relating to such bearer debt security.

Limitation on Liens

The Indentures do not allow us, and we may not permit any of our Restricted Subsidiaries to, issue, incur, assume, guarantee or suffer to exist any indebtedness for borrowed money secured by a pledge of, lien on or security interest in any shares of voting stock of any Restricted Subsidiary without effectively providing that the securities issued under the Indentures will be secured equally and ratably with such secured indebtedness.

The term "Restricted Subsidiary" as defined in the Indentures means Bear Stearns, CTC, BSSC and any of our other subsidiaries owning, directly or indirectly, any of the common stock of, or succeeding to a significant portion of the business, property or assets of, a Restricted Subsidiary, or with which a Restricted Subsidiary is merged or consolidated.

Merger and Consolidation

The Indentures allow us to consolidate or merge with or into any other corporation, and may sell, lease or convey all or substantially all of our assets to any corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the United States or any U.S. state, if:

- (1) we or any other successor corporation shall not immediately after the merger or consolidation be in default under the Indentures; and
- (2) the continuing corporation (if other than us), or the resulting entity that receives substantially all of our assets, shall expressly assume:
 - (a) payment of the principal of, and premium, if any, and interest on (and any additional amounts payable in respect of) the debt securities and
 - (b) performance and observance of all of the covenants and conditions of the Indentures to be performed or observed by us.

Unless otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, and subject to the foregoing, the Indentures permit:

a consolidation, merger, sale of assets or other similar transaction that may adversely affect our creditworthiness or that of a successor or combined entity;

a change in control; or

a highly leveraged transaction involving us, whether or not involving a change in control;

and the Indentures, therefore, will not protect holders of the debt securities from the substantial impact that any of the transactions described above may have on the value of the debt securities.

Modification and Waiver

With the consent of the holders of 66²/₃% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of each series affected, we and the Trustee may modify or amend the applicable Indenture, without the consent of each holder of the outstanding debt security affected, unless the modification or amendment:

changes the stated maturity or the date of any installment of principal of, or interest on, any debt security or changes its redemption price or optional redemption price;

reduces the principal amount of, or the rate of interest on, or the amount of any additional amount payable on, any debt security, or reduces the amount of principal that could be declared due and payable before the stated maturity of that debt security, or changes our obligation to pay any additional amounts (except as permitted under the applicable Indenture), or reduces the

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

amount of principal of a discount security that would be due and payable if accelerated under the applicable Indenture;

changes the place or currency of any payment of principal, premium, if any, or interest on any debt security;

impairs the right to institute suit for the enforcement of any payment on or with respect to any debt security;

reduces the percentage in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series, the consent of whose holders is required to modify or amend the applicable Indenture; or

modifies the foregoing requirements or reduces the percentage of outstanding debt securities necessary to waive any past default to less than a majority.

We may make any of these amendments or modifications, however, with the consent of the holder of each outstanding debt security affected.

Except with respect to defaults relating to certain fundamental provisions of the applicable Indenture, which cannot be waived without the consent of the holders of each outstanding security of a series affected, the holders of at least a majority in principal amount of outstanding debt securities of any series may, with respect to that series, waive past defaults under the applicable Indenture and waive compliance with certain provisions of the applicable Indenture, either in a specific instance or generally.

Events of Default Senior Indenture

Under the Senior Indenture, an "Event of Default" with respect to any Senior Debt Securities mean:

- (1) a failure to pay any interest, or any additional amounts payable, on any debt securities of that series for 30 days after payment is due;
- (2) a failure to pay the principal of, and premium, if any, on any debt security of that series when due;
- (3) a failure to deposit any sinking fund payment when due relating to that series;
- (4) a failure to perform any other covenant contained in the Indenture or relating to that series that has continued for 60 days after written notice was provided;
- (5) a failure lasting 10 days after notice relating to any of our other indebtedness for borrowed money or indebtedness of any Restricted Subsidiary in excess of \$10 million, that results in such indebtedness becoming due and payable before maturity;
- (6) certain events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization, whether voluntary or involuntary; and
- (7) any other Event of Default with respect to debt securities of that series.

If an Event of Default for any series of Senior Debt Securities occurs and continues, the Trustee or the holders of 25% of the aggregate principal amount (or any lesser amount that the series may provide) of the outstanding Senior Debt Securities affected by the default may require us to immediately repay the entire principal amount (or any lesser amount that the series may provide) of the outstanding Senior Debt Securities of such series.

So long as the Trustee has not yet obtained a judgment or decree for payment of money due, and we have paid all amounts due (other than those due solely as a result of acceleration) and have remedied all Events of Default, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding Senior

Debt Securities of the affected series may rescind any acceleration and its consequences or may waive any past default. However, the holders of a majority in principal amount of all outstanding Senior Debt Securities of the affected series may not waive any Event of Default with respect to any series of Senior Debt Securities in the following two circumstances:

a failure to pay the principal of, and premium, if any, or interest on, or any additional amounts payable in respect of, any Senior Debt Security of that series for which payment had not been subsequently made; or

a covenant or provision that cannot be modified or amended without the consent of each holder of outstanding Senior Debt Security of that series.

The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding Senior Debt Securities of a series may direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the Trustee or exercising any trust or power conferred on the Trustee with respect to Senior Debt Securities of that series, provided that this direction is not in conflict with any rule of law or the Senior Indenture. Before proceeding to exercise any right or power under the Senior Indenture at the direction of those holders, the Trustee will be entitled to receive from those holders reasonable security or indemnity against the costs, expenses and liabilities which might be incurred by it in complying with any such direction.

Events of Default Subordinated Indenture

The only events of default under the Subordinated Indenture with respect to Subordinated Debt Securities of any series will be (i) certain events in bankruptcy or insolvency, whether voluntary or involuntary, involving us or our receivership or the receivership of substantially all our assets; (ii) default in the deposit of any sinking fund payment; (iii) and default in the performance, or breach, of our covenants or warranties, subject to applicable notice requirements and grace periods.

If an event of default with respect to Subordinated Debt Securities of any series at the time outstanding occurs and is continuing, the Trustee or the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding Subordinated Debt Securities of that series may declare the principal amount of (or, if any of the Subordinated Debt Securities of that series are discount securities or indexed securities, the portion of the principal amount of such Subordinated Debt Securities as may be specified in the terms thereof) and all accrued but unpaid interest on all the Subordinated Debt Securities of that series to be due and payable immediately, by a written notice to us (and to the Trustee, if given by holders), and upon such a declaration the principal amount (or specified amount) and interest of that series shall become immediately due and payable.

The foregoing provision would, in the event of the bankruptcy or insolvency involving us, be subject as to enforcement to the broad equity powers of a federal bankruptcy court and to the determination by that court of the nature and status of the payment claims of the holders of the Subordinated Debt Securities. At any time after a declaration of acceleration with respect to the Subordinated Debt Securities of any series has been made, but before a judgment or decree for payment of the money due has been obtained, the holders of a majority in principal amount of outstanding Subordinated Debt Securities of that series may, under certain circumstances, rescind and annul the acceleration and its consequences but only if all Defaults have been remedied, or if permitted, waived, and if certain other conditions have been satisfied.

The following events will be defaults ("Defaults") under the Subordinated Indenture with respect to Subordinated Debt Securities of any series:

- (a) an event of default with respect to that series of Subordinated Debt Securities;

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

(b) failure to pay principal or premium, if any, on any Subordinated Debt Securities of that series at maturity, continued for seven days; and

(c) failure to pay any interest, if any, on any Subordinated Debt Securities of that series when due and payable, continued for 30 days.

If a Default with respect to the Subordinated Debt Securities of any series occurs and is continuing, the Trustee may, subject to certain limitations and conditions, seek to enforce its rights and the rights of the holders of Subordinated Debt Securities of that series and may demand that the Company pay to it the whole amount then due and payable on such Subordinated Debt Securities.

The Subordinated Indenture provides that, subject to the duty of the Trustee upon the occurrence of a Default to act with the required standard of care, the Trustee will be under no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under the Subordinated Indenture at the request or direction of any of the holders of Subordinated Securities of any series unless the same holders shall have offered to the Trustee reasonable indemnity or security against the costs, expenses and liabilities which may be incurred by the Trustee in compliance with the request or direction. Subject to certain provisions, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding Subordinated Debt Securities of any series will have the right to direct the time, method, and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the Trustee or exercising any trust or power conferred on the Trustee, with respect to the Subordinated Debt Securities of that series.

Concerning the Trustee

Under the Indentures, within 90 days after any default, the Trustee will notify you of the default, unless the default is cured or waived.

The Trustee may withhold notice of a default (except a default relating to the payment of principal, premium or interest, or any additional amounts related to any debt security or the payment of any sinking fund installment), if the Trustee in good faith determines that withholding notice is in your interests.

If a default in the performance or breach of any covenant or warranty in the Indentures or relating to that series occurs and continues for 60 days after written notice has been given to us or the Trustee by the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of a series, the Trustee will not give notice to the holders for at least an additional 30 days after such default.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

Under the Indentures, we are required to deliver to the Trustee an annual statement as to our fulfillment of all of our indenture obligations.

Subordinated Debt Securities

The Subordinated Debt Securities will be our direct, unsecured obligations. Our obligations pursuant to the Subordinated Debt Securities will be subordinate in right of payment to all Senior Indebtedness as defined below under "Subordination."

Subordination

Our obligation to make any payment on account of the principal of or premium, if any, and interest, if any, on the Subordinated Debt Securities will be subordinate and junior in right of payment to our obligations to the holders of our Senior Indebtedness to the extent described herein.

"Senior Indebtedness" is defined in the Subordinated Indenture to mean our "Indebtedness for Money Borrowed," whether outstanding on the date of the Subordinated Indenture or thereafter created, assumed or incurred, except "Indebtedness Ranking on a Parity with the Securities" or "Indebtedness Ranking Junior to the Securities" and any deferrals, renewals or extensions of the Senior Indebtedness. As of May 31, 2006, our Senior Indebtedness, as defined in the Subordinated Indenture, was approximately \$65.9 billion. This number does not include the \$248.6 billion, as of May 31, 2006, of our subsidiaries' indebtedness and liabilities. Senior Indebtedness, as defined in the Subordinated Indenture, is effectively subordinated to our subsidiaries' indebtedness and liabilities.

"Indebtedness for Money Borrowed" is defined in the Subordinated Indenture as:

- (a) any obligation of ours, or any obligation guaranteed by us, for the repayment of borrowed money, whether or not evidenced by bonds, debentures, notes or other written instruments,
- (b) similar obligations arising from off-balance sheet guarantees and direct credit substitutes,
- (c) obligations associated with derivative products, such as interest-rate and foreign-exchange-rate contracts, commodity contracts and similar arrangements and
- (d) any deferred obligations for the payment of the purchase price of property or assets.

"Indebtedness Ranking on a Parity with the Securities" is defined in the Subordinated Indenture to mean our Indebtedness for Money Borrowed, whether outstanding on the date of the Subordinated Indenture or thereafter created, assumed or incurred, which specifically by its terms ranks equally with and not prior to the Subordinated Debt Securities in the right of payment upon the happening of any event of the kind specified in the first sentence of the next paragraph. As of May 31, 2006, there was no Indebtedness Ranking on a Parity with the Securities, as defined in the Subordinated Indenture.

"Indebtedness Ranking Junior to the Securities" is defined in the Subordinated Indenture to mean any of our Indebtedness for Money Borrowed, whether outstanding on the date of execution of the Subordinated Indenture or thereafter created, assumed or incurred, which specifically by its terms ranks junior to and not equally with or prior to the Subordinated Debt Securities (and any other Indebtedness Ranking on a Parity with the Subordinated Debt Securities) in right of payment upon the happening of certain bankruptcy, insolvency, receivership or winding-up events described below. As of May 31, 2006, there was no Indebtedness Ranking Junior to the Securities, as defined in the Subordinated Indenture.

In the case of any bankruptcy, insolvency, receivership, conservatorship, reorganization, readjustment of debt, marshaling of assets and liabilities or similar proceedings or any liquidation or winding up involving us, whether voluntary or involuntary, all of our obligations to holders of our

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

Senior Indebtedness will be entitled to be paid in full before any payment can be made on account of the principal of, or premium, if any, or interest, if any, on the Subordinated Debt Securities of any series. In the event and during the continuation of any default in the payment of principal of, or premium, if any, or interest, if any, on, any Senior Indebtedness beyond any applicable grace period, or in the event that any event of default with respect to any Senior Indebtedness has occurred and is continuing, or would occur as a result of certain payments, permitting the holders of the relevant Senior Indebtedness (or a trustee on behalf of the holders thereof) to accelerate its maturity, then, unless and until we cure such default or event of default or such default or event of default is waived or ceases to exist, we will not make any payment of principal of, or premium, if any, or interest, if any, on the Subordinated Debt Securities, or in respect of any redemption, exchange, retirement, purchase or other acquisition of any of the Subordinated Debt Securities.

As of May 31, 2006, we had no Subordinated Debt Securities outstanding. When issued, our Subordinated Debt Securities will be subordinated to our Senior Debt Securities and both the Senior Debt Securities are and the Subordinated Debt Securities will be effectively subordinated to our subsidiaries' existing and future indebtedness and liabilities, which as of May 31, 2006 totaled \$248.6 billion.

Any applicable prospectus supplement relating to an issuance of Subordinated Debt Securities will set forth (as of the most recent practicable date) the aggregate amount of outstanding Senior Indebtedness and any limitation on the issuance of additional Senior Indebtedness.

Holders of Subordinated Securities, by their acceptance of the Subordinated Debt Securities, will be deemed to have irrevocably waived any rights they may have to counterclaim or set-off amounts they owe to us against amounts owed to them by us under the Subordinated Indenture or to institute proceedings in respect of these amounts.

By reason of the above subordination in favor of the holders of our Senior Indebtedness, in the event of our bankruptcy or insolvency, holders of our Senior Indebtedness may receive more, ratably, and holders of the Subordinated Debt Securities having a claim pursuant to the Subordinated Debt Securities may receive less, ratably, than our other creditors.

Defeasance

If provided for under the Indentures with respect to Senior Debt Securities or Subordinated Debt Securities of any series that are registered debt securities denominated and payable only in U.S. dollars (except as otherwise provided under the applicable Indenture), we will:

be discharged from any and all obligations in respect of the debt securities of that series under the Indenture (except for certain obligations to register the transfer or exchange of debt securities of that series, replace stolen, lost or mutilated debt securities of that series, maintain paying agents and hold moneys for payment in trust) on the 91st day after the applicable conditions described in this paragraph have been satisfied; or

not be subject to provisions of the Indenture described above under the subsections entitled " Limitation on Liens" and " Merger and Consolidation" with respect to the debt securities of that series;

in each case if we deposit with the Trustee, in trust, money or U.S. government obligations that, through the payment of interest and principal in accordance with their terms, will provide money in an amount sufficient to pay all the principal (including any mandatory sinking fund payments) of, and premium, if any, and any interest on, the debt securities of that series on the dates such payments are due in accordance with the terms of those debt securities.

To exercise either option, we are required to deliver to the Trustee an opinion of counsel to the effect that:

- (1) the deposit and related defeasance would not cause the holders of the debt securities of the series being defeased to recognize income, gain or loss for U.S. federal income tax purposes; and
- (2) if the debt securities of that series are then listed on the NYSE, the exercise of the option would not result in delisting.

We may specify defeasance provisions with respect to any series of debt securities.

Redemption Upon Certain Tax Events

If (a) as a result of any change in, or amendment to, the laws (or any regulations or rulings promulgated under those laws) of the United States (or any political subdivision or taxing authority of the United States or in the United States), or any change in, or amendments to, the official position regarding the application or interpretation of these laws, regulations or rulings, which is announced or becomes effective on or after the date of this prospectus, we become or will become obligated to pay additional amounts as described in the applicable prospectus supplement or (b) any act is taken by a taxing authority of the United States on or after the date of this prospectus, whether that act is taken with respect to us or any affiliate, that results in a substantial probability that we will or may be required to pay such additional amounts, then we may, at our option, redeem, in whole, but not in part, the debt securities on any Interest Payment Date on not less than 30 nor more than 60 days' prior notice, at a redemption price equal to 100% of their principal amount, together with interest accrued on the debt securities to the date fixed for redemption; provided that we determine, in our business judgment, that the obligation to pay such additional amounts cannot be avoided by the use of reasonable measures available to us, not including substitution of the obligor under the securities.

Principal Paying Agent, Paying Agents, Registrar and Transfer Agent

JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. will initially act as the principal office or agency where the Senior Debt Securities and the Subordinated Debt Securities may be presented for payment (the "Principal Paying Agent"). We have appointed JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank) to serve as registrar (the "Registrar") under each of the Indentures.

Methods of Receiving Payments on the Debt Securities

The Principal Paying Agent will pay interest to The Depository Trust Company ("DTC"), or its nominee, by wire transfer of same day funds for credit to the accounts of DTC's participants and subsequent distribution to the beneficial owners of the securities, or, if the securities are issued in certificated form under the circumstances described below in "Certificates in Registered Form," the Principal Paying Agent will pay the registered holder of the securities against presentation and surrender by such holder of its security to any paying agent, by check drawn on a bank in New York City and mailed on the business day immediately before the interest due date.

Payment of Additional Amounts

Subject to the various exceptions and limitations set forth below, we may pay as additional interest or principal, as the case may be, on the debt securities, all such additional amounts that are necessary in order that the net payment by us or a paying agent of the principal of and interest on the debt securities to a person that is not a "U.S." person "for U.S.", federal income tax purposes, after deduction for any tax, assessment or governmental charge of the United States or a political subdivision or taxing authority thereof or therein, imposed by withholding with respect to the payment and as a

result of any change in, or amendment to, the laws (or any regulations or rulings promulgated thereunder) of the United States (or any political subdivision or taxing authority thereof or therein), or any change in, or amendment to, the official position regarding the application or interpretation of such laws, regulations or rulings, which is announced or becomes effective on or after the closing date of the debt securities, will not be less than the amount provided in the debt securities to be then due and payable. However, the obligation to pay additional amounts shall not apply:

(1) to a tax, assessment or governmental charge that is imposed or withheld solely by reason of the holder, or a fiduciary, settlor, beneficiary, member or shareholder of the holder, if the holder is an estate, trust, partnership or corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes, or a person holding a power over such an estate, trust, partnership or corporation, or a person holding a power over such an estate or trust administered by a fiduciary holder, being considered as:

(a) being or having been present or engaged in a trade or business in the United States or having or having had a permanent establishment in the United States;

(b) having a current or former connection with the United States, including a connection as a citizen or resident thereof;

(c) being or having been a domestic personal holding company, a passive foreign investment company or a controlled foreign corporation with respect to the United States or a corporation that has accumulated earnings to avoid U.S. federal income tax;

(d) being or having been a private foundation or other tax-exempt organization;

(e) being or having been a "10-percent shareholder" of the Company as defined in Section 871(h)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or any successor provision; or

(f) being a bank receiving payments on an extension of credit made pursuant to a loan agreement entered into in the ordinary course of its trade or business;

(2) to any holder that is not the sole beneficial owner of the debt securities, or a portion thereof, or that is a fiduciary or partnership, but only to the extent that a beneficiary or settlor with respect to the fiduciary, a beneficial owner or member of the partnership would not have been entitled to the payment of an additional amount had the beneficiary, settlor, beneficial owner or member received directly its beneficial or distributive share of the payment;

(3) to a tax, assessment or governmental charge that is imposed or withheld solely by reason of the failure of the holder or any other person to comply with certification, identification or information reporting requirements concerning the nationality, residence, identity or connection with the United States of the holder or beneficial owner of such debt security, if compliance is required by statute or regulation of the United States or of any political subdivision or taxing authority thereof or therein, or by an applicable income tax treaty to which the United States is a party as a precondition to exemption from such tax, assessment or other governmental charge;

(4) to a tax, assessment or governmental charge that is imposed otherwise than by withholding by us or a paying agent from payments on or in respect of a debt security;

(5) to a tax, assessment or governmental charge that is imposed or withheld by reason of the presentation by or on behalf of the beneficial owner of any debt security for payment on a date more than 15 days after the payment becomes due or is duly provided for, whichever occurs later;

(6) to an estate, inheritance, gift, sales, excise, transfer, wealth or personal property tax or a similar tax, assessment or governmental charge;

(7) to any tax, assessment or other governmental charge required to be withheld by any paying agent from any payment of principal of or interest on any debt security, if such payment can be made without such withholding by any other paying agent; or

(8) in the case of any combination of any of the above items;

nor shall additional amounts be paid with respect to any payment on a debt security to a holder who is a fiduciary or partnership or other than the sole beneficial owner of such payment to the extent such payment would be required by the laws of the United States (or any political subdivision thereof) to be included in the income, for tax purposes, of a beneficiary or settlor with respect to such fiduciary or a member of such partnership or a beneficial owner who would not have been entitled to the additional amounts had such beneficiary, settlor, member or beneficial owner held its interest in the debt security directly.

The debt securities are subject in all cases to any tax, fiscal or other law or regulation or administrative or judicial interpretation that is applicable to them. Except as specifically provided under this heading " Payment of Additional Amounts" and under the heading " Redemption Upon Certain Tax Events," we are not required to make any payments with respect to any tax, assessment or governmental charge imposed by any government or a political subdivision or taxing authority thereof or therein.

Unclaimed Amounts

The Indentures provide that any payments in respect of principal and any interest remaining that are unclaimed for two years after their due date will be paid to us, and the holder of the debt security will after that time look, as an unsecured creditor, only to us for payment of those amounts.

Governing Law

The Indentures, the Senior Debt Securities and the Subordinated Debt Securities will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York.

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

This section sets forth certain general terms and provisions of the warrants to which any prospectus supplement may relate. The particular terms of the warrants offered by any prospectus supplement and the extent to which such general terms and provisions will not apply to the warrants so offered will be described in the prospectus supplement relating to those warrants.

We may issue warrants that are debt warrants, index warrants, interest rate warrants or universal warrants as described in the applicable prospectus supplement. Warrants may be offered independently of or together with one or more additional warrants, any series of debt securities, preferred stock or other securities or any combination thereof and may be attached to or separate from any such securities. The warrants will be settled either through physical delivery or through payment of a cash settlement value as described in this prospectus and in any applicable prospectus supplement.

Each series of warrants will be issued under a separate warrant agreement to be entered into between us and a bank or a trust company, as warrant agent, all as described in the prospectus supplement relating to that series of warrants. The warrant agent will act solely as our agent under the applicable warrant agreement and in connection with the certificates for any warrants of that series, and will not assume any obligation or relationship of agency or trust for or with any holders of those warrant certificates or beneficial owners of those warrants.

This section, along with the description in the applicable prospectus supplement, is a summary of certain provisions of the forms of warrant agreements and warrant certificates and is not complete. We

urge you to read the warrant agreements and the warrant certificates, because those documents, and not these descriptions, define your rights as a holder of warrants. We have filed copies of the forms of the warrant agreements and warrant certificates as exhibits to the Registration Statement of which this prospectus is a part. Copies of the forms of warrant agreements and warrant certificates are available as described under "Where You Can Find More Information."

Debt Warrants

We may issue, together with debt securities or separately, debt warrants for the purchase of debt securities on terms to be determined at the time of sale.

Index Warrants

We may issue index warrants entitling the holders thereof to receive from us, upon exercise, an amount in cash determined by reference to decreases or increases in the level of a specific index or in the levels (or relative levels) of two or more indices or combinations of indices, which index or indices may be based on one or more stocks, bonds or other securities, one or more interest rates, one or more currencies or currency units, or any combination of the foregoing.

Interest Rate Warrants

We may issue interest rate warrants entitling the holders thereof to receive from us, upon exercise, an amount in cash determined by reference to decreases or increases in the yield or closing price of one or more specified debt instruments or in the interest rates, interest rate swap rates, or other rates established from time to time by one or more specified financial institutions, or any combination of the foregoing.

Universal Warrants

We may also issue universal warrants:

to purchase or sell securities of one or more issuers, securities based on the performance of an issuer, securities based on the performance of an issuer but excluding the performance of a particular subsidiary or subsidiaries of that issuer, a basket of securities, or securities whose value is determined by reference to the performance, level, or value of, any other financial, economic or other measure or instrument, including the occurrence or non-occurrence of any event or circumstance, or any combination of the above;

entitling the holders thereof to receive from us, upon exercise, an amount in cash determined by reference to the right to purchase or the right to sell a specified amount of one or more currencies or currency units or any combination of the foregoing for a specified amount of one or more different currencies or currency units or any combination of the foregoing;

to purchase or sell commodities; or

in such other form as shall be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

We refer to the property in the above clauses as the warrant property. We may satisfy our obligations, if any, with respect to any universal warrants by delivering the warrant property, cash or in the case of warrants to purchase or sell securities or commodities, the cash value of the securities or commodities, as described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Further Information in Prospectus Supplement

General Terms of Warrants

The applicable prospectus supplement may contain, where applicable, the following additional information relating to the warrants:

the specific designation and aggregate number of warrants;

the offering price;

the currency, currency unit, currency index or currency basket based on or relating to currencies for which those warrants may be purchased;

the date on which the right to exercise those warrants will commence and the date on which that right will expire or, if you may not continuously exercise the warrants throughout that period, the specific date on which you may exercise the warrants;

whether the warrants will be issued in registered form or bearer form;

whether those warrants are extendible and the period or periods of such extendibility;

the terms upon which bearer warrants of any series may be exchanged for registered warrants of that series;

whether those warrants will be issued in book-entry form, as a global warrant certificate, or in certificated form;

any applicable U.S. federal income tax consequences;

the identity of the warrant agent for the warrants and of any other depositories, execution or paying agents, transfer agents, registrars, determination, or other agents;

the proposed listing, if any, of the warrants or any securities purchasable upon exercise of the warrants on any securities exchange;

whether the warrants are to be sold separately or with other securities; and

any other terms of those warrants not inconsistent with the applicable warrant agreement.

Additional Terms of Debt Warrants

The applicable prospectus supplement may contain, where applicable, the following additional information relating to any debt warrants:

the designation, aggregate principal amount, currency and terms of the debt securities that may be purchased upon exercise of the debt warrants;

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

the exercise price and whether the exercise price may be paid in cash, by the exchange of any debt warrants or other securities or both and the method of exercising the debt warrants; and

the designation, terms and amount of debt securities, if any, to be issued together with each of the debt warrants and the date, if any, after which the debt warrants and debt securities will be separately transferable.

Additional Terms of Index and Interest Rate Warrants

The applicable prospectus supplement may contain, where applicable, the following additional information relating to any index and interest rate warrants:

the exercise price, if any;

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

the index or indices for any index warrants, which index or indices may be based on one or more U.S. or foreign stocks, bonds, or other securities, one or more U.S. or foreign interest rates, one or more currencies or currency units, or any combination of the foregoing, and may be a preexisting U.S. or foreign index or an index based on one or more securities, interest rates, currencies or currency units selected by us solely in connection with the issuance of such index warrants, and certain information regarding such index or indices and the underlying securities, interest rates, currencies or currency units (including, to the extent possible, the policies of the publisher of the index with respect to additions, deletions and substitutions of such securities, interest rates, currencies or currency units);

for index warrants, the method of providing for a substitute index or indices or otherwise determining the amount payable in connection with the exercise of such index warrants if the index changes or ceases to be made available by the publisher of the index;

the commodity, commodity index or combinations of commodities or commodity indices;

any market to which the commodity or commodity index relates;

the debt instrument (which may be one or more debt instruments issued either by the U.S. government or by a foreign government), the rate (which may be one or more interest rates or interest rate swap rates established from time to time by one or more specified financial institutions) or the other yield or price utilized for any interest rate warrants, and certain information regarding such debt instrument, rate, yield or price;

the strike amount, the method of determining the spot amount and the method of expressing movements in the yield or closing price of the debt instrument or in the level of the rate as a cash amount in the currency in which the interest rate cash settlement value of any interest rate warrants is payable;

whether such warrants shall be put warrants, call warrants or otherwise;

the formula for determining the cash settlement value of each warrant;

the circumstances, if any, under which a minimum and/or maximum expiration value is applicable upon the expiration of such warrants;

any minimum number of warrants which must be exercised at any one time, other than upon automatic exercise;

the maximum number, if any, of such warrants that may, subject to our election, be exercised by all holders on any day;

any provisions for the automatic exercise of such warrants other than at expiration;

whether and under what circumstances such warrants may be canceled by us prior to the expiration date; and

any other procedures and conditions relating to the exercise of such warrants.

Additional Terms of Universal Warrants

The applicable prospectus supplement may contain, where applicable, the following additional information relating to any universal warrants:

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

whether the universal warrants are put warrants or call warrants and whether you or we will be entitled to exercise the warrants;

the specific warrant property, and the amount or the method for determining the amount of the warrant property, that may be purchased or sold upon exercise of each universal warrant;

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

the currency in which the exercise price, if any, and the cash settlement value of such warrants is payable;

the base currency and the reference currency for any currency warrants;

the price at which and the currency with which the underlying securities or commodities may be purchased or sold upon the exercise of each universal warrant, or the method of determining that price;

whether the exercise price may be paid in cash, by the exchange of any other security offered with the universal warrants or both and the method of exercising the universal warrants; and

whether the exercise of the universal warrants is to be settled in cash or by delivery of the underlying securities or commodities or both.

Before you exercise your warrants, you will not have any of the rights of (1) holders of the debt securities of the series purchasable upon such exercise, including the right to receive payments of principal, any premium or interest on those debt securities, or to enforce any of the covenants or rights in the relevant indenture or any other agreement or (2) holders of preferred stock or other securities purchasable upon such exercise, including the right to receive payments of dividends, if any, on such preferred stock or other securities or to exercise any applicable right to vote.

You may exchange registered warrants of any series for registered warrants of the same series representing in total the number of warrants that you have surrendered for exchange. To the extent permitted, you may exchange warrant certificates and transfer registered warrants at the corporate trust office of the warrant agent for that series of warrants (or any other office indicated in the prospectus supplement relating to that series of warrants).

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, warrants will be issued in book-entry only form, and will be represented by a single global warrant certificate, registered in the name of the nominee of the depository of the warrants.

Bearer warrants will be transferable by delivery. The applicable prospectus supplement will describe the terms of exchange applicable to any bearer warrants.

Exercise of Warrants

You may exercise your warrants at the corporate trust office of the warrant agent (or any other office indicated in the prospectus supplement relating to those warrants) up to 5:00 p.m., New York time, on the date stated in the prospectus supplement relating to those warrants or as may be otherwise stated in the prospectus supplement. If you do not exercise your warrants before the time on that date (or such later date that we may set), your unexercised warrants will become void.

Only registered securities will be issued and delivered upon exercise of registered warrants. Warrants will be deemed to have been exercised upon receipt of the warrant certificate and any payment, if applicable, at the corporate trust office of the warrant agent or any other office indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement and we will, as soon as practicable after such receipt and payment, issue and deliver the warrant property or pay the settlement value in respect of the warrants.

If fewer than all of the warrants represented by such warrant certificate are exercised, a new warrant certificate will be issued for the remaining amount of the warrants. Special provisions relating to the exercise of any bearer warrants or automatic exercise of warrants will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK

This section describes certain general terms and provisions of the preferred stock to which any prospectus supplement may relate. The particular terms of the preferred stock offered by any prospectus supplement and the extent, if any, to which such general terms will not apply to the preferred stock so offered will be described in the prospectus supplement relating to such preferred stock.

This section, along with the description in the applicable prospectus supplement, is a summary of certain provisions of our restated certificate of incorporation, as amended, including the applicable certificates of designation, and is not complete.

We urge you to read the restated certificate of incorporation, as amended, and the certificate of designation for the relevant series of preferred stock in which you are intending to invest, because those documents, and not these descriptions, define your rights as a holder of preferred stock. We have filed a copy of the restated certificate of incorporation, as amended, and the certificates of designation for our currently outstanding shares of preferred stock as exhibits to the Registration Statement of which this prospectus is a part. Copies of the restated certificate of incorporation, as amended, are available described under "Where You Can Find More Information."

General

Our restated certificate of incorporation, as amended, authorizes the issuance of 10,000,000 shares of preferred stock, \$1.00 par value. We may issue preferred stock from time to time in one or more series. The exact terms of each series will be established by our board of directors or a duly authorized committee of the board.

The terms of any particular series of preferred stock will be described in the prospectus supplement relating to that particular series of preferred stock, including, where applicable:

- (1) the designation, stated value and liquidation preference of such preferred stock and the number of shares offered;
- (2) the offering price;
- (3) the dividend rate or rates (or method of calculation), the date or dates from which dividends shall accrue, and whether such dividends shall be cumulative or noncumulative and, if cumulative, the dates from which dividends shall commence to cumulate;
- (4) any redemption or sinking fund provisions;
- (5) the amount that shares of such series shall be entitled to receive in the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding up;
- (6) the terms and conditions, if any, on which shares of such series shall be exchangeable for shares of our stock of any other class or classes, or other series of the same class;
- (7) the voting rights, if any, of shares of such series in addition to those set forth in "Voting Rights" below;
- (8) the status as to reissuance or sale of shares of such series redeemed, purchased or otherwise reacquired, or surrendered to us on conversion or exchange;
- (9) the conditions and restrictions, if any, on the payment of dividends or on the making of other distributions on, or the purchase, redemption or other acquisition by us or any subsidiary of, the common stock or any other class of our stock ranking junior to the shares of such series as to dividends or upon liquidation;

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

(10) the conditions and restrictions, if any, on the creation of indebtedness of us or of any subsidiary, or on the issue of any additional stock ranking on a parity with or prior to the shares of such series as to dividends or upon liquidation; and

(11) any additional dividend, liquidation, redemption, sinking or retirement fund and other rights, preferences, privileges, limitations and restrictions of such preferred stock.

The preferred stock will, when issued, be fully paid and nonassessable. Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, the shares of each series of preferred stock will upon issuance rank senior to the common stock and on a parity in all respects with each other outstanding series of preferred stock. As of May 31, 2006, there were outstanding:

3,493,250 depository shares, each representing a one-fourth interest in a share of 6.15% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series E;

1,800,200 depository shares, each representing a one-fourth interest in a share of 5.72% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series F; and

2,044,675 depository shares, each representing a one-fourth interest in a share of 5.49% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series G.

The preferred stock will have no preemptive rights to subscribe for any additional securities that may be issued by us.

Dividends

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, before any dividends may be declared or paid to the holders of shares of our common stock, par value \$1.00 per share, or of any other of our capital stock ranking junior to any series of the preferred stock as to the payment of dividends, the holders of the preferred stock of that series will be entitled to receive, when and as declared by the board of directors or a duly authorized committee of the board, out of our net profits or net assets legally available therefor, dividends payable quarterly on January 15, April 15, July 15 and October 15, in each year at such rates as will be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement. Such rates may be fixed or variable or both. If variable, the formula used for determining the dividend rate for each dividend period will be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement. Dividends will be payable to the holders of record as they appear on our stock transfer records on such dates (not less than 15 days nor more than 60 days prior to a dividend payment date) as will be fixed by the board of directors or a duly authorized committee thereof. Dividends will be paid in the form of cash.

Dividends on any series of preferred stock may be cumulative or noncumulative, as specified in the applicable prospectus supplement. If the board of directors fails to declare a dividend payable on a dividend payment date on any series of preferred stock for which dividends are noncumulative, then the holders of the preferred stock of that series will have no right to receive a dividend in respect of the dividend period relating to such dividend payment date, and we will have no obligation to pay the dividend accrued for such period, whether or not dividends on that series are declared or paid on any future dividend payment dates. If dividends on any series of preferred stock are not paid in full or declared in full and sums set apart for the payment thereof, then no dividends shall be declared and paid on that series unless declared and paid ratably on all shares of every series of preferred stock then outstanding, including dividends accrued or in arrears, if any, in proportion to the respective amounts that would be payable per share if all such dividends were declared and paid in full.

The prospectus supplement relating to a series of preferred stock will specify the conditions and restrictions, if any, on the payment of dividends or on the making of other distributions on, or the purchase, redemption or other acquisition by us or any of our subsidiaries of, the common stock or any other class of our stock ranking junior to the shares of that series as to dividends or upon liquidation

and any other preferences, rights, restrictions and qualifications that are not inconsistent with the certificate of incorporation and the applicable certificates of designation.

Liquidation Rights

Unless otherwise specified in the prospectus supplement relating to a series of preferred stock, upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up (whether voluntary or involuntary), the holders of preferred stock of that series will be entitled to receive out of our assets available for distribution to our stockholders, whether from capital, surplus or earnings, the amount specified in the applicable prospectus supplement for that series, together with all dividends accrued and unpaid, before any distribution of the assets will be made to the holders of common stock or any other class or series of shares ranking junior to that series of preferred stock upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up, and will be entitled to no other or further distribution. If, upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, the assets distributable among the holders of a series of preferred stock shall be insufficient to permit the payment in full to the holders of that series of preferred stock of all amounts payable to those holders, then the entire amount of our assets thus distributable will be distributed ratably among the holders of that series of preferred stock in proportion to the respective amounts that would be payable per share if those assets were sufficient to permit payment in full.

Neither our consolidation, merger or other business combination with or into any other individual, firm, corporation or other entity nor the sale, lease, exchange or conveyance of all or any part of our property, assets or business will be deemed to be a liquidation, dissolution or winding up.

Redemption

If so specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, any series of preferred stock may be redeemable, in whole or in part, at our option or pursuant to a retirement or sinking fund or otherwise, on terms and at the times and the redemption prices specified in that prospectus supplement. If less than all shares of the series at the time outstanding are to be redeemed, the shares to be redeemed will be selected pro rata or by lot, in such manner as may be prescribed by resolution of the board of directors.

Notice of any redemption of a series of preferred stock will be given by publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the Borough of Manhattan, the City of New York, not less than 30 nor more than 60 days prior to the redemption date. We will mail a similar notice, postage prepaid, not less than 30 nor more than 60 days prior to the redemption date, addressed to the respective holders of record of shares of that series at the addresses shown on our stock transfer records, but the mailing of such notice will not be a condition of such redemption. In order to facilitate the redemption of shares of preferred stock, the board of directors may fix a record date for the determination of the shares to be redeemed. Such record date will be not more than 60 days nor less than 30 days prior to the redemption date.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

Prior to the redemption date, we will deposit money for the payment of the redemption price with a bank or trust company doing business in the Borough of Manhattan, the City of New York, and having a capital and surplus of at least \$10,000,000. Unless we fail to make such deposit, on the redemption date, all dividends on the series of preferred stock called for redemption will cease to accrue and all rights of the holders of shares of that series as our stockholders shall cease, except the right to receive the redemption price (but without interest). Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, any monies so deposited which remain unclaimed by the holders of the shares of that series at the end of six years after the redemption date will become our property, and will be paid by the bank or trust company with which it has been so deposited to us.

Conversion Rights

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, no series of preferred stock will be convertible into common stock.

Voting Rights

Unless otherwise determined by the board of directors and indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, holders of the preferred stock of that series will not have any voting rights except as described below or as otherwise from time to time required by law. Whenever dividends on any series of preferred stock or any other class or series of stock ranking on a parity with that series with respect to the payment of dividends shall be in arrears for dividend periods, whether or not consecutive, containing in the aggregate a number of days equivalent to six calendar quarters, the holders of shares of that series (voting separately as a class with all other series of preferred stock upon which like voting rights have been conferred and are exercisable) will be entitled to vote for the election of two of the authorized number of our directors at the next annual meeting of stockholders and at each subsequent meeting until all dividends accumulated on that series have been fully paid or set apart for payment. The term of office of all directors elected by the holders of a series of preferred stock shall terminate immediately upon the termination of the right of the holders of that series to vote for directors. Whenever the shares of a series are or become entitled to vote, each holder of shares of that series will have one vote for each share held.

So long as shares of any series of preferred stock remain outstanding, we shall not, without the consent of the holders of at least two-thirds of the shares of that series outstanding at the time (voting separately as a class with all other series of preferred stock upon which like voting rights have been conferred and are exercisable):

- (1) issue or increase the authorized amount of any class or series of stock ranking senior to the shares of that series as to dividends or upon liquidation; or
- (2) amend, alter or repeal the provisions of our certificate of incorporation or of the resolutions contained in the certificates of designation, whether by merger, consolidation or otherwise, so as to materially and adversely affect any power, preference or special right of the outstanding shares of that series or the holders thereof. Any increase in the amount of the authorized common stock or authorized preferred stock or the creation and issuance of common stock or any other series of preferred stock ranking on a parity with or junior to a series of preferred stock as to dividends and upon liquidation shall not be deemed to materially and adversely affect the powers, preferences or special rights of the shares of that series.

Unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, the transfer agent, dividend disbursing agent and registrar for each series of preferred stock will be Mellon Investor Services L.L.C.

DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITARY SHARES

This section describes certain general terms and provisions of the depositary shares and depositary receipts which we may elect to issue and to which any prospectus supplement may relate.

This section, along with the description in the applicable prospectus supplement, is a summary of certain provisions of the deposit agreement (a form of which is filed as an exhibit hereto) relating to the applicable series of Preferred Stock and is not complete.

General

We may, at our option, elect to offer fractional interests in shares of a series of preferred stock, rather than whole shares. If we exercise our option, we will provide for the issuance by a depository of depositary receipts evidencing depositary shares, each of which will represent a fractional interest (to be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement) in a share of a particular series of the Preferred Stock as more fully described below.

If we offer fractional shares of any series of preferred stock, those shares will be deposited under a separate deposit agreement among us, a depository bank or trust company selected by us and having its principal office in the United States and having a combined capital and surplus of at least \$50,000,000 and the holders from time to time of the depositary receipts issued thereunder by that depository. The applicable prospectus supplement will set forth the name and address of the depository. Subject to the terms of the deposit agreement, each owner of a depositary share will be entitled, in proportion to the applicable fractional interest in a share of preferred stock underlying such depositary share, to all the rights and preferences of the fractional share of preferred stock underlying such depositary share (including dividend, voting, redemption and liquidation rights).

Until definitive engraved depositary receipts are prepared, upon our written order, the depository may issue temporary depositary receipts substantially identical to (and entitling the holders thereof to all the rights pertaining to) the definitive depositary receipts but not in definitive form. Definitive depositary receipts will be prepared thereafter without unreasonable delay. Temporary depositary receipts will be exchangeable for definitive depositary receipts at our expense.

Dividends and Other Distributions

The depository will distribute to the holders of depositary receipts evidencing depositary shares all cash dividends or other cash distributions received in respect of the underlying fractional shares of preferred stock in proportion to their respective holdings of the depositary shares on the relevant record date. The depository will distribute only the amount that can be distributed without attributing to any holder of depositary shares a fraction of one cent. Any balance not so distributed will be held by the depository (without liability for interest thereon) and will be added to and treated as part of the next sum received by the depository for distribution to holders of depositary receipts then outstanding.

If we distribute property other than cash in respect of shares of preferred stock deposited under a deposit agreement, the depository will distribute the property received by it to the record holders of depositary receipts evidencing the depositary shares relating to those shares of preferred stock, in proportion, as nearly as may be practicable, to their respective holdings of the depositary shares on the relevant record dates. If the depository determines that it is not feasible to make such a distribution, the depository may, with our approval, adopt such method as it deems equitable and practicable to give effect to the distribution, including the sale of the property so received and distribution of the net proceeds from such sale to the holders of the depositary receipts.

Each deposit agreement will also contain provisions relating to the manner in which any subscription or similar right offered by us to holders of the preferred stock deposited under such deposit agreement will be made available to holders of depositary shares.

Redemption of Depositary Shares

If the shares of preferred stock deposited under a deposit agreement are subject to redemption, in whole or in part, then, upon any such redemption, the depositary shares relating to those deposited shares will be redeemed from the proceeds received by the depository as a result of the redemption. Whenever we redeem shares of preferred stock held by a depository, the depository will redeem as of the same redemption date the number of depositary shares representing the shares of preferred stock so redeemed. The depository will mail the notice of redemption not less than 20 and not more than 50 days prior to the date fixed for redemption to the record holders of the depositary shares to be so redeemed. The redemption price per depositary share will be equal to the applicable fraction of the per share redemption price of the preferred stock underlying such depositary share. If less than all the depositary shares are to be redeemed, the depositary shares to be redeemed will be selected by lot or pro rata as may be determined by the depository.

Once notice of redemption has been given, from and after the redemption date, the depositary shares called for redemption will no longer be deemed to be outstanding, unless we fail to redeem the shares of preferred stock so called for redemption. On the redemption date, all rights of the holders of depositary shares will cease, except for the right to receive the monies payable upon such redemption and any money or other property to which the holders of depositary shares were entitled upon such redemption (but without interest), upon surrender to the depository of the depository receipts evidencing depositary shares.

Voting Rights

As soon as practicable after receipt of notice of any meeting at which the holders of shares of preferred stock deposited under a deposit agreement are entitled to vote, the depository will mail the information contained in that notice of meeting (and any accompanying proxy materials) to the holders of the depositary shares relating to such preferred stock as of the record date for such meeting. Each such holder will be entitled, subject to any applicable restrictions, to instruct the depository as to the exercise of the voting rights of the preferred stock represented by such holder's depositary shares. The depository will attempt to vote the preferred stock represented by those depositary shares in accordance with the holder's instructions, and we will agree to take all action deemed necessary by the depository to enable the depository to do so. The depository will abstain from voting shares of preferred stock deposited under a deposit agreement if it has not received specific instructions from the holders of the depositary shares representing those shares.

Withdrawal of Stock

Upon surrender of depositary receipts at the principal office of the depository (unless the depositary shares evidenced by the depository receipts have previously been called for redemption), and subject to the terms of the deposit agreement, the owner of the depositary shares shall be entitled to delivery of whole shares of preferred stock and all money and other property, if any, represented by those depositary shares. Fractional shares of preferred stock will not be delivered. If the depositary receipts surrendered by the holder evidence depositary shares in excess of those representing the number of whole shares of preferred stock to be withdrawn, the depository will deliver to the holder at the same time a new depositary receipt evidencing the excess depositary shares. Holders of shares of preferred stock which are withdrawn will not thereafter be entitled to deposit such shares under a deposit agreement or to receive depositary shares. We do not expect that there will be any public trading market for the preferred stock, except as represented by depositary shares.

Amendment and Termination of the Deposit Agreement

We may from time to time amend the form of depositary receipt evidencing any depositary shares and any provision of a deposit agreement by agreement between us and the depository. However, any amendment that materially and adversely alters the rights of the existing holders of depositary shares will not be effective unless and until approved by the holders of at least a majority of the depositary shares then outstanding under that deposit agreement. Each deposit agreement will provide that each holder of depositary shares who continues to hold those depositary shares at the time an amendment becomes effective will be deemed to have consented to the amendment and will be bound by that amendment. Except as may be necessary to comply with any mandatory provisions of applicable law, no amendment may impair the right, subject to the terms of the deposit agreement, of any holder of any depositary shares to surrender the depositary receipt evidencing those depositary shares to the depository together with instructions to deliver to the holder the whole shares of preferred stock represented by the surrendered depositary shares and all money and other property, if any, represented thereby. A deposit agreement may be terminated by us or the depository only if:

- (1) all outstanding depositary shares issued under the deposit agreement have been redeemed; or
- (2) there has been a final distribution in respect of the preferred stock relating to those depositary shares in connection with any liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the Company and the amount received by the depository as a result of that distribution has been distributed by the depository to the holders of those depositary shares.

Charges of Depository

We will pay all transfer and other taxes and governmental charges arising solely from the existence of the depositary arrangements. We will pay charges of any depository in connection with the initial deposit of preferred stock and the initial issuance of the depositary shares and any redemption of such preferred stock. Holders of depositary shares will pay any other taxes and charges incurred for their accounts as are provided in the deposit agreement.

Reports

Each depository will forward to the holders of depositary shares issued by that depository all reports and communications from us that are delivered to the depository and that we are required to furnish to the holders of the preferred stock held by the depository. In addition, each depository will make available for inspection by the holders of those depositary shares, at the principal office of such depository and at such other places as it may from time to time deem advisable, all reports and communications received from us that are received by such depository as the holder of preferred stock.

Limitation on Liability

Neither we nor any depository will assume any obligation or will be subject to any liability under a deposit agreement to holders of the depositary shares other than for its negligence or willful misconduct. Neither we nor any depository will be liable if it is prevented or delayed by law or any circumstance beyond its control in performing its obligations under a deposit agreement. The obligations of us and any depository under a deposit agreement will be limited to performance in good faith of its duties thereunder, and they will not be obligated to prosecute or defend any legal proceeding in respect of any depositary shares or preferred stock unless satisfactory indemnity is furnished. We and any depository may rely on written advice of counsel or accountants, on information provided by persons presenting preferred stock for deposit, holders of depositary shares or other persons believed in good faith to be competent to give such information and on documents believed to be genuine and to have been signed or presented by the proper party or parties.

Resignation and Removal of Depository

A depository may resign at any time by delivering to us notice of its election to resign, and we may remove any depository at any time. Any such resignation or removal will take effect upon the appointment of a successor depository and its acceptance of such appointment. Such successor depository must be appointed within 60 days after delivery of the notice of resignation or removal and must be a bank or trust company having its principal office in the United States of America and having a combined capital and surplus of at least \$50,000,000.

DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASE CONTRACTS

This section describes certain general terms and provisions of the purchase contracts which we may elect to issue. The particular terms of any offered purchase contracts will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement. In addition, we may issue a purchase contract separately or as part of a unit as described below in "Description of Units."

General

The following description of the purchase contracts sets forth certain general terms and provisions of the purchase contracts to which any prospectus supplement may relate. We urge you to read the more detailed provisions of the applicable purchase contracts for a complete description and for provisions that might be important to you because these documents, and not these descriptions, define your rights as a party to the purchase contract. We have filed copies of the forms of the purchase contract reflecting the particular terms and provisions of a series of offered purchase contracts as exhibits to the Registration Statement of which this prospectus is a part. Copies of the forms of the purchase contracts are available as described under "Where You Can Find More Information."

Purchase Contract Property

We may offer purchase contracts for the purchase or sale of, or whose cash value is determined in whole or in part by reference to the performance, level or value of, one or more of the following:

securities of one or more issuers, including our securities;

one or more currencies;

one or more commodities;

any index, formula or any other method, including a method based on changes in the prices or performance of particular securities, currencies, intangibles, goods, articles, or commodities; or any other financial, economic or other measure or instrument, including the occurrence or non-occurrence of any event or circumstance, which may include any credit event relating to any company or companies or other entity or entities, which may include a government or governmental agency, other than us; and/or

one or more indices or baskets of the items described above.

Each instrument, measure or event described above is referred to as a "Purchase Contract Property."

Each purchase contract will obligate the holder to purchase or sell, and obligate us to sell or purchase, on specified dates, one or more Purchase Contract Properties at a specified price or prices, or the holder or us to settle the purchase contract with a cash payment determined by reference to the value, performance or level of one or more Purchase Contract Properties, on specified dates and at a specified price or prices.

Some purchase contracts may include multiple obligations to purchase or sell different Purchase Contract Properties, and both we and the holder may be sellers or buyers under the same purchase contract.

Types of Purchase Contracts We May Issue

We may issue purchase contracts in such amounts and in as many distinct series as we wish. We may also "reopen" a previously issued series of purchase contracts and issue additional purchase contracts of that series. In addition, we may issue a purchase contract separately or as part of a unit, as described below under "Description of Units."

This section summarizes terms of the purchase contracts that apply generally to all purchase contracts. We describe most of the financial and other specific terms of your purchase contract in the applicable prospectus supplement and those terms may vary from the terms described here.

As you read this section, please remember that the specific terms of your purchase contract as described in the prospectus supplement will supplement and, if applicable, may modify or replace the general terms described in this section. If there are differences between the prospectus supplement and this prospectus, the prospectus supplement will control. Thus, the statements we make in this section may not apply to your purchase contract.

When we refer to a series of purchase contracts, we mean all the purchase contracts issued as part of the same series under the applicable governing instrument. When we refer to the prospectus supplement, we mean the prospectus supplement describing the specific terms of the purchase contract you purchase. The terms used in the prospectus supplement will have the meanings described in this prospectus, unless otherwise specified.

General Terms of Purchase Contracts

The applicable prospectus supplement may contain, where applicable, the following information about your purchase contract:

whether the purchase contract obligates the holder to purchase or sell, or both purchase and sell, one or more Purchase Contract Properties and the nature and amount of each of those properties, or the method of determining those amounts;

whether the purchase contract is to be prepaid or not and the governing document for the contract;

whether the purchase contract is to be settled by delivery, or by reference or linkage to the value, performance or level of, the Purchase Contract Properties;

any acceleration, cancellation, termination or other provisions relating to the settlement of the purchase contract;

any applicable U.S. federal income tax consequences;

whether the purchase contract will be issued as part of a unit and, if so, the other securities comprising the unit and whether any unit securities will be subject to a security interest in our favor as described below; and

whether the purchase contract will be issued in fully registered or bearer form and in global or non-global form.

If we issue a purchase contract as part of a unit, the accompanying prospectus supplement will state whether the contract will be separable from the other securities in the unit before the contract

settlement date. A purchase contract issued in a unit in the United States may not be separated before the 91st day after the unit is issued.

Purchase Contracts

Some purchase contracts may require the holders to satisfy their obligations under the purchase contracts at the time the contracts are issued. We refer to these contracts as "Prepaid Purchase Contracts." Some purchase contracts do not require the holders to satisfy their obligations under the purchase contracts until settlement. We refer to those purchase contracts as "Non-Prepaid Purchase Contracts." The holder of a Non-Prepaid Purchase Contract may remain obligated to perform under the purchase contract for a substantial period of time.

Purchase Contracts may be issued under a unit agreement, if they are issued in units, or under some other document, if they are not. We describe unit agreements generally under "Description of Units" below. We will describe the particular governing document that applies to your Purchase Contracts in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Pledge by Holders to Secure Performance. The applicable prospectus supplement will describe the holder's obligations under the purchase contract and the governing documents that may be secured by collateral. In that case, the holder, acting through the unit agent as its attorney-in-fact, if applicable, will pledge the items described below to a collateral agent named in the prospectus supplement, which will hold them, for our benefit, as collateral to secure the holder's obligations. We refer to this as the "Pledge." The Pledge will create a security interest in and a lien upon and right of set off against the holder's entire interest in and to the unit (if the purchase contract is part of a unit):

any preferred stock, debt security, warrants, depositary shares or other property that is, or becomes, part of units that include the purchase contracts, or other property as may be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, which we refer to as the "Pledged Items;"

all additions to and substitutions for the Pledged Items as may be permissible, if specified in the applicable prospectus supplement;

all income, proceeds and collections received or to be received, or derived or to be derived, at any time from or in connection with the Pledged Items described above; and

all powers and rights owned or thereafter acquired under or with respect to the Pledged Items.

The collateral agent will forward all payments from the Pledged Items to us, unless the payments have been released from the Pledge in accordance with the purchase contract and the governing document. We will use the payments from the Pledged Items to satisfy the holder's obligations under the purchase contract.

Form

We will issue each purchase contract in global (book-entry) form only, unless we specify otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement. Purchase contracts in book-entry form will be represented by a global security registered in the name of a depositary, which will be the holder of all the purchase contracts represented by the global security. Those who own beneficial interests in a purchase contract will do so through participants in the depositary's system, and the rights of these indirect owners will be governed solely by the applicable procedures of the depositary and its participants. We describe book-entry securities under "Book-Entry Procedures and Settlement."

DESCRIPTION OF UNITS

General

This section describes certain general terms and provisions of any combination of one or more debt securities, preferred stock, warrants, depositary shares, purchase contracts and other securities and property. Each unit will be issued so that the holder of the unit is also the holder of each security included in the unit. Thus, the holder of a unit will have the rights and obligations of a holder of each included security. The unit agreement under which a unit is issued may provide that the securities included in the unit may not be held or transferred separately, at any time or at any time before a specified date.

The applicable prospectus supplement may describe the designation and terms of the units and of the securities comprising the units issued by us, securities of an entity affiliated or not affiliated with us or other property constituting the units, including whether and under what circumstances those securities may be held or transferred separately; any provisions of the governing unit agreement that differ from those described below; any provisions for the issuance, payment, settlement, transfer or exchange of the units or of the securities comprising the units; and any applicable United States federal income tax consequences.

The applicable provisions described in this section, as well as those described under "Description of Debt Securities," "Description of Warrants," "Description of Preferred Stock," "Description of Depositary Shares" "Description of Purchase Contracts," and "Description of Units" will apply to each unit and to any debt security, preferred stock, warrant, depositary share or purchase contract included in each unit, respectively.

Series of Units We May Issue

We may issue units in such amounts and in as many distinct series as we wish. We may also "reopen" a previously issued series of units and issue additional units of that series. This section summarizes terms of the units that apply generally to all series. We describe most of the financial and other specific terms of your series in the prospectus supplement accompanying this prospectus. The specific terms of your unit as described in the prospectus supplement will supplement and, if applicable, may modify or replace the terms described herein.

When we refer to a series of units, we mean all units issued as part of the same series under the applicable unit agreement. We will identify the series of which your units are a part in the prospectus supplement. When we refer to the prospectus supplement, we mean the prospectus supplement describing the specific terms of the units you purchase. The terms used in the prospectus supplement will have the meanings described in this prospectus, unless otherwise specified.

General Terms of a Unit Agreement

The following provisions will generally apply to all unit agreements unless otherwise stated in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Enforcement of Rights. The unit agent under a unit agreement will act solely as our agent in connection with the units issued under that agreement. The unit agent will not assume any obligation or relationship of agency or trust for or with any holders of those units or of the securities comprising those units. The unit agent will not be obligated to take any action on behalf of those holders to enforce or protect their rights under the units or the included securities.

Except as described in the next paragraph, a holder of a unit may, without the consent of the unit agent or any other holder, enforce its rights as holder under any security included in the unit, in accordance with the terms of that security and the indenture, warrant agreement, deposit agreement,

purchase contract or other agreement or instrument under which that security is issued. Those terms are described elsewhere in this prospectus under the sections relating to debt securities, preferred stock, warrants, depositary shares and purchase contracts.

Limitations affecting the ability of a holder of units issued under that agreement to enforce its rights, including any right to bring a legal action, will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Modification Without Consent of Holders. We and the applicable unit agent may amend or supplement any unit or unit agreement without the consent of any holder to evidence our successor's assumption of our obligations under the units and the unit agreement; cure any ambiguity; correct or supplement any defective or inconsistent provision; or to make any other change that we believe is necessary or desirable and will not adversely affect the interests of the affected holders in any material respect.

We do not need any approval to make changes that affect only units to be issued after the changes take effect. We may also make changes that do not adversely affect a particular unit in any material respect, even if they adversely affect other units in a material respect. In those cases, we do not need to obtain the approval of the holder of the unaffected unit; we need only obtain any required approvals from the holders of the affected units.

Modification With Consent of Holders. We may not amend any particular unit or a unit agreement with respect to any particular unit unless we obtain the consent of the holder of that unit, if the amendment would:

- (1) modify or affect any unit agreement or any units in a manner materially adverse to the holder; or
- (2) reduce the percentage of outstanding units the consent of whose owners is required to amend that series or class, or the applicable unit agreement with respect to that series or class.

We may not amend any particular purchase contract or a unit agreement as it relates to any purchase contract or the rights of the holders of units with respect to any purchase contract, if the amendment would:

- (1) impair the right of the holder to institute suit for the enforcement of any purchase contract;
- (2) reduce the percentage of outstanding purchase contracts the consent of whose owners is required to amend the applicable unit agreement relating to purchase contracts or for the waiver of any purchase contract defaults under any unit agreement or the consequences of such defaults; or
- (3) modify or affect the holders' rights and obligations under any purchase contract in a manner materially adverse to the holder.

Any other change to a particular unit agreement and the units or purchase contracts issued under that agreement would require the following approval:

- (1) If the change affects only the units of a particular series issued under that agreement, the change must be approved by the holders of a majority of the outstanding units of that series;
- (2) If the change affects the units of more than one series issued under that agreement, it must be approved by the holders of a majority of all outstanding units of all series affected by the change, with the units of all the affected series voting together as one class for this purpose;

(3) If the change affects only purchase contracts or a unit agreement as it relates to purchase contracts, the change must be approved by the holders of a majority of the affected unsettled purchase contracts.

Unit Agreements Will Not Be Qualified Under Trust Indenture Act. No unit agreement will be qualified as an Indenture, and no unit agent will be required to qualify as a trustee, under the TIA. Therefore, holders of units issued under unit agreements will not have the protections of the TIA with respect to their units.

Mergers and Similar Transactions Permitted; No Restrictive Covenants or Events of Default

The unit agreements will not restrict our ability to merge or consolidate with, or sell our assets to, another corporation or other entity or to engage in any other transactions. If at any time we merge or consolidate with, or sell our assets substantially as an entirety to, another corporation or other entity, the successor entity will succeed to and assume our obligations under the unit agreements. We will then be relieved of any further obligation under these agreements.

The unit agreements will not include any restrictions on our ability to put liens on our assets, including our interests in our subsidiaries, nor will they restrict our ability to sell our assets. Other than in connection with purchase contracts and the Indentures, the unit agreements also will not provide for any events of default or remedies upon the occurrence of any events of default.

Form, Exchange and Transfer

We will issue each unit in global (book-entry) form only, unless we specify otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement. Units in book-entry form will be represented by a global security registered in the name of a depository, which will be the holder of all the units represented by the global security. Those who own beneficial interests in a unit will do so through participants in the depository's system, and the rights of these indirect owners will be governed solely by the applicable procedures of the depository and its participants. We describe book-entry securities below under "Book-Entry Procedures and Settlement."

In addition, we will issue each unit in registered form, unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

BOOK-ENTRY PROCEDURES AND SETTLEMENT

Each debt security, warrant, share of preferred stock, depository share, purchase contract and unit in registered form will be represented either:

by one or more global securities representing the entire issuance of securities; or

by a certificate issued in definitive form to a particular investor.

Book-Entry System

Unless otherwise specified in a prospectus supplement, we will issue each security in book-entry only form. This means that we will not issue actual notes or certificates. You will not receive a definitive note or other certificate representing your interest in the securities. Instead, we will issue global securities in registered form representing the entire issuance of securities. Each global security will be registered in the name of a financial institution that holds them as depository on behalf of other financial institutions that participate in that depository's book-entry system. These participating institutions, in turn, hold beneficial interests in the securities on their own behalf or on behalf of their customers.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

If a security is registered on the books that we or the Trustee, warrant agent, depository, unit agent, trustee or other agent maintain in the name of a particular investor, we refer to that investor as the "holder" of that security. These persons are the legal holders of the securities. Consequently, for securities issued in global form, we will recognize only the depository as the holder of the securities and we will make all payments on the securities, including deliveries of any property other than cash, to the depository. The depository passes along the payments it receives from us to its participants, which in turn pass the payments along to their customers who are the beneficial owners. The depository and its participants are obligated to pass these payments along under agreements they have made with one another or with their customers, and they are not obligated to do so under the terms of the securities.

As a result, investors will not own securities issued in book-entry form directly. Instead, they will own beneficial interests in a global security through a bank, broker, or other financial institution that participates in the depository's book-entry system or holds an interest through a participant in the depository's book-entry system. As long as the securities are issued in global form, investors will be indirect owners, and not holders, of the securities. The depository will not have knowledge of the actual beneficial owners of the securities.

Certificates in Registered Form

In the future we may cancel a global security or issue securities initially in non-global, or certificated, form. We do not expect to exchange global securities for actual notes or certificates registered in the names of the beneficial owners of the global securities representing the securities unless:

the depository, such as DTC, notifies us that it is unwilling or unable to continue as depository for the global securities or we become aware that the depository has ceased to be a clearing agency registered under the Exchange Act, and in any case we fail to appoint a successor to the depository within 90 calendar days; or

we, in our sole discretion, determine not to have any notes of a series represented by a global security.

Upon the occurrence of either of the foregoing events, we will issue securities in certificated form in exchange for all outstanding global securities. An owner of a beneficial interest in the global securities to be exchanged will be entitled to delivery in definitive form of securities equal in principal amount to such beneficial interest and to have such securities registered in its name. Debt securities issued in definitive form will be issued in denominations of \$1,000 and integral multiples of \$1,000 in excess thereof, except as otherwise specified in the applicable pricing supplement, and will be issued in registered form only, without coupons.

You should read "Limitations on Issuance of Bearer Debt Securities and Bearer Warrants" for a description of certain restrictions on the issuance of individual bearer debt securities in exchange for beneficial interests in a global security.

Street Name Owners

When actual notes or certificates registered in the names of the beneficial owners are issued, investors may choose to hold their securities in their own names or in street name. Securities held by an investor in street name would be registered in the name of a bank, broker, or other financial institution that the investor chooses, and the investor would hold only a beneficial interest in those securities through an account that he or she maintains at that institution. For securities held in street name, we will recognize only the intermediary banks, brokers, and other financial institutions in whose names the securities are registered as the holders of those securities and we will make all payments on those securities, including deliveries of any property other than cash, to them. These institutions pass

along the payments they receive to their customers who are the beneficial owners, but only because they agree to do so in their customer agreements or because they are legally required to do so. Investors who hold securities in street name will be indirect owners, not holders, of those securities.

Legal Holders

Our obligations, as well as the obligations of the Trustee under the Indentures and the obligations, if any, of any warrant agents, deposit agent, Property Trustee, and any other third parties employed by us, the Trustee, or any of those agents, run only to the holders of the securities. We do not have obligations to investors who hold beneficial interests in global securities, who hold the securities in street name, or who hold the securities by any other indirect means. This will be the case whether an investor chooses to be an indirect owner of a security or has no choice because we are issuing the securities only in global form. For example, once we make a payment or give a notice to the holder, we have no further responsibility for that payment or notice even if that holder is required, under agreements with depository participants or customers or by law, to pass it along to the indirect owners, but does not do so. Similarly, if we want to obtain the approval of the holders for any purpose, such as to amend the Indenture for a series of debt securities or a warrant agreement for a series of warrants or to relieve us of the consequences of a default or of our obligation to comply with a particular provision of the Indenture, we would seek the approval only from the holders, and not the indirect owners, of the relevant securities. Whether and how the holders contact the indirect owners is up to the holders. When we refer to "you" in this section, we mean those who invest in the securities being offered by this prospectus, whether they are the holders or only indirect owners of those securities. When we refer to "your securities" in this section, we mean the securities in which you will hold a direct or indirect interest.

Special Considerations for Indirect Owners

If you hold securities through a bank, broker, or other financial institution, either in book-entry form or in street name, you should check with your own institution to find out:

how it handles payments on your securities and notices;

whether you can provide contact information to the registrar to receive copies of notices directly;

whether it imposes fees or charges;

whether and how you can instruct it to exercise any rights to purchase or sell warrant property under a warrant or to exchange or convert a security for or into other property;

how it would handle a request for the holders' consent, if required;

whether and how you can instruct it to send you the securities registered in your own name so you can be a holder, if that is permitted at any time;

how it would exercise rights under the securities if there were a default or other event triggering the need for holders to act to protect their interests; and

if the securities are in book-entry form, how the depository's rules and procedures will affect these matters.

Depositories for Global Securities

Each security issued in book-entry form and represented by a global security will be deposited with, and registered in the name of, one or more financial institutions or clearing systems, or their nominees, which we will select. These financial institutions or clearing systems that we select for any

security are called "depositories." Each series of securities will have one or more of the following as the depositories:

DTC;

a financial institution holding the securities on behalf of Euroclear Bank S.A./N.V., as operator of the Euroclear system, which is known as "Euroclear;"

a financial institution holding the securities on behalf of Clearstream Banking, société anonyme, Luxembourg, which is known as "Clearstream;" and

any other clearing system or financial institution named in the applicable prospectus supplement.

The depositories named above also may be participants in one another's systems. For example, if DTC is the depository for a global security, investors may hold beneficial interests in that security through Euroclear or Clearstream as DTC participants. The depository or depositories for your securities will be named in the applicable prospectus supplement. If no depository is named, the depository will be DTC.

The Depository Trust Company

The following is based on information on DTC's website at www.dtcc.com:

DTC will act as securities depository for the securities. The securities will be issued as fully-registered securities registered in the name of Cede & Co., which is DTC's partnership nominee, or any other name as may be requested by an authorized representative of DTC. Generally, one fully registered global security will be issued for each issue of the securities, each in the aggregate principal amount of the issue, and will be deposited with DTC. If, however, the aggregate principal amount of any issue exceeds \$500 million, one certificate will be issued with respect to each \$500 million of principal amount, and an additional certificate will be issued with respect to any remaining principal amount of the issue.

DTC, the world's largest depository, is a limited-purpose trust company organized under the New York Banking Law, a "banking organization" within the meaning of the New York Banking Law, a member of the Federal Reserve System, a "clearing corporation" within the meaning of the New York Uniform Commercial Code, and a "clearing agency" registered under Section 17A of the Exchange Act. DTC holds and provides asset servicing for over two million issues of United States and non-United States equity issues, corporate and municipal debt issues, and money market instruments from over 100 countries that its participants deposit with DTC. DTC also facilitates the post-trade settlement among direct participants of sales and other securities transactions in deposited securities through electronic computerized book-entry transfers and pledges between direct participants. This eliminates the need for physical movement of certificates representing securities. Direct participants include both United States and non-United States securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, clearing corporations, and certain other organizations. DTC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation ("DTCC"). DTCC, in turn, is owned by a number of direct participants of DTC and members of the National Securities Clearing Corporation, Government Securities Clearing Corporation, MBS Clearing Corporation, and Emerging Markets Clearing Corporation, also subsidiaries of DTCC, as well as by NYSE Group, Inc., the American Stock Exchange LLC, and the NASD. Access to the DTC system is also available to others such as both United States and non-United States securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, and clearing corporations that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a direct participant, either directly or indirectly. The DTC rules applicable to its participants are on file with the SEC.

Purchases of the securities under the DTC system must be made by or through direct participants, which will receive a credit for the securities on DTC's records. The beneficial interest of each actual

purchaser of each security is in turn to be recorded on the direct and indirect participants' records. Beneficial owners will not receive written confirmation from DTC of their purchase. A beneficial owner, however, is expected to receive written confirmations providing details of the transaction, as well as periodic statements of their holdings, from the direct or indirect participant through which the beneficial owner entered into the transaction. Transfers of beneficial interests in the securities are to be accomplished by entries made on the books of direct and indirect participants acting on behalf of beneficial owners. Beneficial owners will not receive certificates representing their beneficial interests in the securities, except if the use of the book-entry system for the securities is discontinued.

To facilitate subsequent transfers, all securities deposited by direct participants with DTC are registered in the name of DTC's partnership nominee, Cede & Co., or such other name as may be requested by an authorized representative of DTC. The deposit of securities with DTC and their registration in the name of Cede & Co. or such other DTC nominee do not effect any change in beneficial ownership. DTC has no knowledge of the actual beneficial owners of the securities; DTC's records reflect only the identity of the direct participants to whose accounts such securities are credited, which may or may not be the beneficial owners. The direct and indirect participants will remain responsible for keeping account of their holdings on behalf of their customers.

Conveyance of notices and other communications by DTC to direct participants, by direct participants to indirect participants, and by direct and indirect participants to beneficial owners will be governed by arrangements among them, subject to any statutory or regulatory requirements as may be in effect from time to time.

None of DTC, Cede & Co., or any other DTC nominee will consent or vote with respect to the securities unless authorized by a direct participant in accordance with DTC's procedures. Under its usual procedures, DTC mails an omnibus proxy to us as soon as possible after the regular record date. The omnibus proxy assigns Cede & Co.'s consenting or voting rights to those direct participants to whose accounts the securities are credited on the regular record date. These participants are identified in a listing attached to the omnibus proxy.

We will make payments of principal, any premium, interest, or other amounts on the securities in immediately available funds directly to Cede & Co., or any other nominee as may be requested by an authorized representative of DTC. DTC's practice is to credit direct participants' accounts upon DTC's receipt of funds and corresponding detail information from us, on the applicable payment date in accordance with their respective holdings shown on DTC's records. Payments by participants to beneficial owners will be governed by standing instructions and customary practices, as is the case with securities held for the accounts of customers in bearer form or registered in street name. These payments will be the responsibility of these participants and not of DTC or any other party, subject to any statutory or regulatory requirements that may be in effect from time to time. Payment of principal and any premium or interest to Cede & Co., or any other nominee as may be requested by an authorized representative of DTC, is our responsibility. Disbursement of the payments to direct participants is the responsibility of DTC, and disbursement of the payments to the beneficial owners is the responsibility of the direct or indirect participants.

We will send any redemption notices to DTC. If less than all of the securities of a series are being redeemed, DTC's practice is to determine by lot the amount of the interest of each direct participant in the issue to be redeemed.

DTC may discontinue providing its services as depository for the securities at any time by giving us reasonable notice. If this occurs, and if a successor securities depository is not obtained, we will print and deliver certificated securities.

The information in this section concerning DTC and DTC's book-entry system has been obtained from sources that we believe to be reliable, but we take no responsibility for its accuracy.

Clearstream and Euroclear

Each series of securities represented by a global security sold or traded outside the United States may be held through Clearstream or Euroclear, which provide clearing, settlement, depository, and related services for internationally traded securities. Both Clearstream and Euroclear provide a clearing and settlement organization for cross-border bonds, equities, and investment funds. Clearstream is incorporated under the laws of Luxembourg. Euroclear is incorporated under the laws of Belgium.

Euroclear and Clearstream are securities clearance systems in Europe that clear and settle securities transactions between their participants through electronic, book-entry delivery of securities against payment. Euroclear and Clearstream may be depositories for a global security. In addition, if DTC is the depository for a global security, Euroclear and Clearstream may hold interests in the global security as participants in DTC. As long as any global security is held by Euroclear or Clearstream as depository, you may hold an interest in the global security only through an organization that participates, directly or indirectly, in Euroclear or Clearstream. If Euroclear or Clearstream is the depository for a global security and there is no depository in the United States, you will not be able to hold interests in that global security through any securities clearance system in the United States. Payments, deliveries, transfers, exchanges, notices, and other matters relating to the securities made through Euroclear or Clearstream must comply with the rules and procedures of those systems. Those systems could change their rules and procedures at any time. We have no control over those systems or their participants and we take no responsibility for their activities. Transactions between participants in Euroclear or Clearstream on one hand, and participants in DTC, on the other hand, when DTC is the depository, also would be subject to DTC's rules and procedures.

Investors will be able to make and receive through Euroclear and Clearstream payments, deliveries, transfers, exchanges, notices, and other transactions involving any securities held through those systems only on days when those systems are open for business. Those systems may not be open for business on days when banks, brokers, and other institutions are open for business in the United States. In addition, because of time-zone differences, United States investors who hold their interests in the securities through these systems and wish to transfer their interests, or to receive or make a payment or delivery or exercise any other right with respect to their interests, on a particular day may find that the transaction will not be effected until the next business day in Luxembourg or Brussels, as applicable. Thus, investors who wish to exercise rights that expire on a particular day may need to act before the expiration date. In addition, investors who hold their interests through both DTC and Euroclear or Clearstream may need to make special arrangements to finance any purchases or sales of their interests between the United States and European clearing systems, and those transactions may settle later than would be the case for transactions within one clearing system.

Clearstream

Clearstream is incorporated under the laws of Luxembourg as a professional depository. Clearstream holds securities for its participating organizations ("Clearstream Participants") and facilitates the clearance and settlement of securities transactions between Clearstream Participants through electronic book-entry charges in accounts of Clearstream Participants, which eliminates the need for physical movement of certificates. Clearstream provides to Clearstream Participants, among other things, services for safekeeping, administration, clearance and settlement of internationally traded securities and securities lending and borrowing.

Conducting business in the domestic markets of several countries as a professional depository, Clearstream is regulated by the Luxembourg Monetary Institute. Clearstream Participants are recognized financial institutions around the world, including underwriters, securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, clearing corporations and certain other organizations and may include some of the Underwriters. Indirect access to Clearstream is also available to others, such as banks,

brokers, dealers and trust companies that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a Clearstream Participant either directly or indirectly.

Distributions with respect to the securities that are held beneficially through Clearstream will be credited to cash accounts of Clearstream Participants in accordance with its rules and procedures, and to the extent received by the U.S. depository for Clearstream.

Euroclear

Euroclear was created in 1968 to hold securities for its participants ("Euroclear Participants") and to clear and settle transactions between Euroclear Participants through simultaneous electronic book-entry delivery against payment, thereby eliminating the need for physical movement of certificates and any risk from lack of simultaneous transfers of securities and cash. The Euroclear System is owned by Euroclear Clearance System Public Limited Company ("ECSplc") and operated through a license agreement by Euroclear Bank S.A./N.V., a bank incorporated under the laws of the Kingdom of Belgium (the "Euroclear Operator").

The Euroclear Operator holds securities and book-entry interests in securities for participating organizations and facilitates the clearance and settlement of securities transactions between Euroclear Participants, and between Euroclear Participants and participants of certain other securities intermediaries through electronic book-entry changes in accounts of such participants or other securities intermediaries.

The Euroclear Operator provides Euroclear Participants, among other things, with safekeeping, administration, clearance and settlement, securities lending and borrowing and related services.

Non-participants of Euroclear may hold and transfer book-entry interests in securities through accounts with a direct Euroclear Participant or any other securities intermediary that holds a book-entry interest in securities through one or more securities intermediaries standing between such other securities intermediary and the Euroclear Operator.

The Euroclear Operator is regulated and examined by the Belgian Banking and Finance Commission and the National Bank of Belgium. Securities clearance accounts and cash accounts with the Euroclear Operator are governed by the Terms and Conditions Governing Use of Euroclear and the related Operating Procedures of the Euroclear System and applicable Belgian law (collectively, the "Euroclear Terms and Conditions"). The Euroclear Terms and Conditions govern transfers of securities and cash within Euroclear, withdrawals of securities and cash from Euroclear, and receipts of payments with respect to securities in Euroclear.

All securities in Euroclear are held on a fungible basis without attribution of specific certificates to specific securities clearance accounts. The Euroclear Operator acts under the Euroclear Terms and Conditions only on behalf of Euroclear Participants and has no record of or relationship with persons holding through Euroclear Participants.

Distributions with respect to securities held beneficially through Euroclear will be credited to the cash accounts of Euroclear Participants in accordance with the Euroclear Terms and Conditions, to the extent received by the U.S. depository for Euroclear.

Definitive Securities

Definitive securities may be issued upon:

- (i) Euroclear and/or Clearstream being closed for a continuous period of 14 days (other than by reason of public holidays); and/or

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

(ii) in the limited circumstances set forth in "Book-Entry Procedures and Settlement Certificates in Registered Form" in the accompanying prospectus.

Definitive securities can be transferred by presentation for registration to the registrar for the securities or other transfer agent at any of their specified offices and must be duly endorsed by the holder or his attorney duly authorized in writing, or accompanied by a written instrument or instruments of transfer in form satisfactory to us or the Trustee, warrant agent, deposit agent, or unit agent, as the case may be, duly executed by the holder or his attorney duly authorized in writing. We may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge that may be imposed in connection with any exchange or registration of transfer of definitive securities.

For the purposes of this description, "business day" means any day, other than a Saturday or Sunday, that is not a day on which banks are authorized or required by law or regulation to close in New York and, where definitive securities have been issued, the relevant place of presentation.

Global Clearance and Settlement Procedures

Initial settlement for the securities will be made in same day funds. Secondary market trading and transfers within DTC, Clearstream or Euroclear, as the case may be, will be made in accordance with the usual rules and operating procedures of those systems. Secondary market trading between DTC participants will occur in the ordinary way in accordance with DTC rules and will be settled in same day funds using DTC's Same-Day Funds Settlement System. Secondary market trading between Clearstream Participants and/or Euroclear Participants will occur in the ordinary way in accordance with the applicable rules and operating procedures of Clearstream and Euroclear and will be settled using the procedures applicable to conventional eurobonds in registered form in same day funds.

Since the purchaser determines the place of delivery, it is important to establish at the time of the trade where both the purchaser's and seller's accounts are located to ensure that settlement can be made on the desired value date.

Trading between DTC Purchasers and Sellers. Secondary market trading between DTC participants will be settled using the procedures applicable to global bonds in same-day funds.

Trading between Euroclear and/or Clearstream Participants. Secondary market trading between Euroclear Participants and/or Clearstream Participants will be settled using the procedures applicable to conventional eurobonds in same-day funds.

Trading between DTC Seller and Euroclear or Clearstream Purchaser. When securities are to be transferred from the account of a DTC participant to the account of a Euroclear or Clearstream Participant, the purchaser will send instructions to Euroclear or Clearstream through a Euroclear or Clearstream Participant, as the case may be, at least one business day before settlement. Euroclear or Clearstream will instruct its respective depository to receive those securities against payment. Payment for the securities will then be made by the depository to the DTC participant's account against delivery of the securities. After settlement has been completed, the securities will be credited to the respective clearing systems, and by the clearing system, in accordance with its usual procedures, to the Euroclear or Clearstream Participant's account. The securities credit will appear the next day (European time) and the cash debit will be back-valued to the value date, which would be the preceding day when settlement occurred in New York. If settlement is not completed on the intended value date and the trade fails, the Euroclear or Clearstream cash debit will be valued as of the actual settlement date.

Euroclear and Clearstream Participants will need to make available to the respective clearing systems the funds necessary to process same-day funds settlement. The most direct means of doing so is to preposition funds for settlement, either from cash on hand or existing lines of credit. However,

under this approach, DTC participants may take on credit exposure to Euroclear and Clearstream until the interests in the Global Security are credited to their accounts one day later.

As an alternative, if Euroclear or Clearstream has extended a line of credit to a Euroclear or Clearstream Participant, as the case may be, that Participant may elect not to preposition funds and allow that credit line to be drawn upon to finance settlement. Under this procedure, Euroclear or Clearstream Participants purchasing securities would incur overdraft charges for one day, assuming they cleared the overdraft when the securities were credited to their accounts. However, interest on the securities would accrue from the value date. Therefore, in many cases the investment income on securities earned during that one-day period may substantially reduce or offset the amount of such overdraft charges, although this result will depend on each Participant's particular cost of funds.

Since the settlement occurs during New York business hours, DTC participants can employ their usual procedures for transferring global bonds to the respective depositories of Euroclear or Clearstream for the benefit of Euroclear or Clearstream Participants. The sale proceeds will be available to the DTC seller on the settlement date. Thus, to the DTC seller, a cross-market sale transaction will settle no differently than a trade between two DTC Participants.

Trading between Euroclear or Clearstream Seller and DTC Purchaser. Because the time zone difference operates in their favor, Euroclear and Clearstream Participants may employ their customary procedures for transactions in which securities are to be transferred by the respective clearing system, through its respective depository, to a DTC participant. The seller will send instructions to Euroclear or Clearstream through a Euroclear or Clearstream Participant at least one business day before settlement. In these cases, Euroclear or Clearstream will instruct its respective depository to credit the securities to the DTC participant's account against payment. The payment will then be reflected in the account of the Euroclear or Clearstream Participant on the following day, and receipt of the cash proceeds in the Euroclear or Clearstream Participant's account would be back-valued to the value date (which would be the preceding day, when settlement occurred in New York).

If the Euroclear or Clearstream Participant has a line of credit in its respective clearing system and elects to be in a debt position in anticipation of receipt of the sale proceeds in its account, the back-valuation may substantially reduce or offset any overdraft charges incurred over that one-day period. If settlement is not completed on the intended value date (that is, the trade fails), receipt of the cash proceeds in the Euroclear or Clearstream Participant's account would instead be valued as of the actual settlement date.

Finally, day traders that use Euroclear or Clearstream to purchase securities from DTC participants for delivery to Euroclear or Clearstream Participants should note that these trades automatically fail on the sale side unless some form of affirmative action is taken. At least three techniques should be readily available to eliminate this potential problem:

- (i) borrowing through Euroclear or Clearstream for one day (until the purchase side of the day trade is reflected in their Euroclear or Clearstream accounts) in accordance with the clearing system's customary procedures;
- (ii) borrowing the securities in the United States from a DTC participant no later than one day before settlement, which would give the securities sufficient time to be reflected in their Euroclear or Clearstream account in order to settle the sale side of the trade; or
- (iii) staggering the value date for the buy and sell sides of the trade so that the value date for the purchase from the DTC participant is at least one day before the value date for the sale to the Euroclear or Clearstream Participant.

Although DTC, Clearstream and Euroclear have agreed to the foregoing procedures in order to facilitate transfers of securities among participants of DTC, Clearstream and Euroclear, they are not

obligated to perform or continue to perform these procedures. As a result, these procedures may be discontinued at any time.

The information in this section concerning DTC, Clearstream, Euroclear and their book-entry systems has been obtained from sources that we believe to be accurate, but we assume no responsibility for the accuracy of this information. We are not responsible for DTC's, Clearstream's, Euroclear's or their participants' performance of their respective obligations, as they are described above or under the rules and procedures governing their respective operations.

Special Considerations for Global Securities

As an indirect owner, an investor's rights relating to a global security will be governed by the account rules of the depository and those of the investor's financial institution or other intermediary through which it holds its interest (e.g., Euroclear or Clearstream if DTC is the depository), as well as general laws relating to securities transfers. We do not recognize this type of investor or any intermediary as a holder of securities. Instead, we deal only with the depository that holds the global security. If securities are issued only in the form of a global security, an investor should be aware of the following:

an investor cannot cause the securities to be registered in his or her own name, and cannot obtain non-global certificates for his or her interest in the securities, except in the special situations described above;

an investor will be an indirect holder and must look to his or her own bank or broker for payments on the securities and protection of any legal rights relating to the securities;

an investor may not be able to sell interests in the securities to some insurance companies and other institutions that are required by law to own their securities in non-book-entry form;

an investor may not be able to pledge his or her interest in a global security in circumstances where certificates representing the securities must be delivered to the lender or other beneficiary of the pledge in order for the pledge to be effective;

the depository's policies will govern payments, deliveries, transfers, exchanges, notices, and other matters relating to an investor's interest in a global security, and those policies may change from time to time;

we, the Trustee, and any warrant agents will not be responsible for any aspect of the depository's policies, actions, or records of ownership interests in a global security;

we, the Trustee, and any warrant agents do not supervise the depository in any way;

the depository may require that those who purchase and sell interests in a global security within its book-entry system use immediately available funds, and your broker or bank may require you to do so as well; and

financial institutions that participate in the depository's book-entry system and through which an investor holds his or her interest in the global securities, directly or indirectly, also may have their own policies affecting payments, deliveries, transfers, exchanges, notices, and other matters relating to the securities. Those policies may change from time to time. For example, if you hold an interest in a global security through Euroclear or Clearstream when DTC is the depository, Euroclear or Clearstream, as applicable, will require those who purchase and sell interests in that security through them to use immediately available funds and comply with other policies and procedures, including deadlines for giving instructions as to transactions that are to be effected on a particular day. There may be more than one financial intermediary in the chain of

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

ownership for an investor. We do not monitor and are not responsible for the policies or actions or records of ownership interests of any of those intermediaries.

Receipt by owners of beneficial interests in a temporary global security of payments relating to their interests will be subject to the restrictions discussed under "Limitations on Issuance of Bearer Securities."

If interest is paid on a bearer global debt security, or if no interest has been paid but the bearer global debt security remains outstanding beyond a reasonable period of time after the restricted period (as defined in applicable U.S. Treasury regulations) has ended, the depository must provide us with a certificate to the effect that the owners of the beneficial interests in the bearer global security are non-U.S. persons or U.S. persons that are permitted to hold bearer debt securities under applicable U.S. Treasury regulations.

In general, U.S. persons that are permitted to hold bearer debt securities are U.S. persons who acquire the securities through the foreign branch of certain U.S. financial institutions and certain U.S. financial institutions that hold the bearer debt securities for resale to non-U.S. persons or who hold the bearer debt securities on their own account through a foreign branch. The certificate must be provided within a reasonable period of time after the end of the restricted period, but in no event later than the date when interest is paid. The certificate must be based on statements provided to the depository by the owners of the beneficial interests.

LIMITATIONS ON ISSUANCE OF BEARER DEBT SECURITIES AND BEARER WARRANTS

In compliance with U.S. federal income tax laws and regulations, bearer debt securities, including bearer debt securities in global form, will not be offered, sold, resold or delivered, directly or indirectly, in the United States or its possessions or to "United States persons," as defined below, except as otherwise permitted by certain U.S. Treasury regulations. Any underwriters, dealers or agents participating in the offerings of bearer debt securities, directly or indirectly, must agree that they will not, in connection with the original issuance of any bearer debt securities or during the "restricted period" (as defined in the Treasury regulations) offer, sell, resell or deliver, directly or indirectly, any bearer debt securities in the United States or to United States persons, other than as permitted by the Treasury regulations. In addition, any underwriters, dealers or agents must have procedures reasonably designed to ensure that their employees or agents who are directly engaged in selling bearer debt securities are aware of the restrictions on the offering, sale, resale or delivery of bearer debt securities.

We will not deliver a bearer debt security (other than a temporary global bearer debt security) in connection with its original issuance or make payments on any bearer debt security until we have received the written certification provided for in the Indentures, the warrant agreement, the deposit agreement, the unit agreement or other applicable agreement or instrument. Each bearer debt security, other than a temporary global bearer debt security, will bear the following legend on the face of the security and on any interest coupons that may be detachable:

"Any United States person who holds this obligation will be subject to limitations under the U.S. income tax laws, including the limitations provided in Sections 165(j) and 1287(a) of the Internal Revenue Code."

The legend also will be evidenced on any book-entry system maintained with respect to the bearer debt securities.

The sections referred to in the legend provide, in general, that a U.S. taxpayer who holds a bearer security or coupon may not deduct any loss realized on the sale, exchange or redemption of the bearer security and any gain which otherwise would be treated as capital gain will be treated as ordinary income, unless the taxpayer is, or holds the bearer security or coupon through, a "financial institution" (as defined in the relevant Treasury regulations) and certain other conditions are satisfied.

For these purposes, "United States" means the United States of America (including the District of Columbia), and its possessions. "United States person" generally means:

a citizen or resident of the United States;

a corporation or partnership (or other entity treated as a corporation or partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes) created or organized in or under the laws of the United States or any state thereof (including the District of Columbia);

an estate whose income is subject to U.S. federal income taxation regardless of its source; or

a trust, if a court within the United States is able to exercise primary supervision over its administration, and one or more United States persons have the authority to control all of its substantial decisions.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

The prospectus supplement relating to bearer warrants will describe any limitations on the offer, sale, delivery and exercise of bearer warrants (including a requirement that a certificate of non-U.S. beneficial ownership be delivered once a bearer warrant is exercised).

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell the securities by any of the following methods:

to underwriters (including Bear Stearns) or dealers, who may act directly or through a syndicate represented by one or more managing underwriters (including Bear Stearns);

through broker-dealers (including Bear Stearns) we have designated to act on our behalf as agents;

directly to one or more purchasers;

directly to the public through Bear Stearns utilizing DA/SSSM (Dutch Auction internet Syndication SystemSM), a rules-based, proprietary, single-priced, modified Dutch Auction syndication system for the pricing and allocation of securities; or

through a combination of any of these methods of sale.

Each prospectus supplement will describe the manner and terms of an offering of securities, including:

the names of any underwriters, dealers, or agents;

whether that offering is being made to underwriters or through agents or directly;

the rules and procedures for the auction process through DA/SSSM, if used;

any underwriting discounts, dealer concessions, agency commissions and any other items that may be deemed to constitute underwriters', dealers' or agents' compensation;

the securities' purchase price or initial public offering price;

the proceeds we anticipate from the sale of the securities; and

any securities exchange on which the offered securities may be listed.

We may enter into derivative or other hedging transactions with financial institutions. These financial institutions may in turn engage in sales of securities to hedge their position, deliver this prospectus in connection with some or all of those sales and use the securities covered by this prospectus to close out any loan of securities or short position created in connection with those sales.

We may effect sales of securities in connection with forward sale agreements with third parties. Any distribution of securities pursuant to any forward sale agreement may be effected from time to time in one or more transactions that may take place through the NYSE, including block trades or ordinary broker's transactions, or through broker-dealers acting either as principal or agent, or through privately negotiated transactions, or through an underwritten public offering, or through a combination of any such methods of sale, at market prices prevailing at the time of sale, at prices relating to such prevailing market prices or at negotiated or fixed prices.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

We may also sell securities short using this prospectus and deliver securities covered by this prospectus to close out any loan of securities or such short positions, or loan or pledge securities to financial institutions that in turn may sell the securities using this prospectus.

We may pledge or grant a security interest in some or all of the securities covered by this prospectus to support a derivative or hedging position or other obligation and, if we default in the

performance of our obligations, the pledgees or secured parties may offer and sell the securities from time to time pursuant to this prospectus.

Distribution Through Underwriters

When securities are to be sold to underwriters, we will execute an underwriting agreement with them at the time of the sale and will name them in the prospectus supplement. Unless otherwise set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, the underwriters' obligations to purchase those securities will be subject to certain conditions set forth in the underwriting agreement. If the underwriters purchase any of the securities, they will be obligated to purchase all of the securities. The underwriters will acquire the securities for their own accounts as principal and may resell them, either directly to the public or to securities dealers, at various times in one or more transactions, including negotiated transactions, either at a fixed public offering price or at varying prices determined at the time of sale. The underwriters may sell the offered securities to or through dealers, and those dealers may receive discounts, concessions, or commissions from the underwriters as well as from the purchasers for whom they may act as agent.

Distribution Through Dealers

We may offer and sell securities from time to time to one or more dealers who would purchase the securities as principal. The dealers then may resell the offered securities to the public at fixed or varying prices to be determined by those dealers at the time of resale. We will set forth the names of the dealers and the terms of the transaction in the prospectus supplement. Any initial public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers may be changed from time to time.

Distribution Through Agents

We may offer and sell securities on a continuous basis through agents that become parties to an underwriting or distribution agreement. We will name any agent involved in the offer and sale and describe any commissions payable by us in the prospectus supplement. Unless otherwise indicated in the prospectus supplement, the agent will be acting on a best efforts basis during the appointment period.

General Information

To the extent that any securities underwritten by Bear Stearns are not resold by Bear Stearns for an amount at least equal to their public offering price, the proceeds from the offering of those securities will be reduced. Until resold, any such preferred stock and depositary shares will be treated as if they were not outstanding. Bear Stearns intends to resell any of those securities at various times after the termination of the offering at varying prices related to prevailing market prices at the time of sale, subject to applicable prospectus delivery requirements.

Securities bought in accordance with a redemption or repayment under their terms also may be offered and sold, if so indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, in connection with a remarketing by one or more firms acting as principals for their own accounts or as agents for us. Any remarketing firm will be identified and the terms of its agreement, if any, with us and its compensation will be described in the prospectus supplement. Remarketing firms may be deemed to be underwriters in connection with the securities remarketed by them.

If so indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will authorize agents, underwriters or dealers to solicit offers by certain specified institutions to purchase securities at the public offering price set forth in the prospectus supplement pursuant to delayed delivery contracts providing for payment and delivery on a future date specified in the prospectus supplement. These contracts will be

subject only to those conditions set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, and the prospectus supplement will set forth the commissions payable for solicitation of these contracts.

Underwriters, dealers and agents participating in any distribution of securities may be deemed "underwriters" within the meaning of the Securities Act and any discounts or commissions they receive in connection with the distribution may be deemed to be underwriting compensation. Those underwriters and agents may be entitled, under their agreements with us, to indemnification by us against certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, or to contribution by us to payments that they may be required to make in respect of those civil liabilities. Various of those underwriters or agents may be customers of, engage in transactions with or perform services for us or our affiliates in the ordinary course of business.

Following the initial distribution of any series of securities (and in the case of shares of preferred stock, subject to obtaining approval or exemption from the NYSE), Bear Stearns may offer and sell previously issued securities of that series at various times in the course of its business as a broker-dealer. Bear Stearns may act as principal or agent in those transactions. Bear Stearns will use this prospectus and the prospectus supplement applicable to those securities in connection with those transactions. Sales will be made at prices related to prevailing prices at the time of sale or at related or negotiated prices. Our other affiliates, including BSIL, may also engage in such transactions and may use this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement for such purpose.

In this prospectus, the terms "offering" means the initial offering of the securities made in connection with their original issuance. This term does not refer to any subsequent resales of securities in market-making transactions. Information about the trade and settlement dates, as well as the purchase price, for a market-making transaction will be provided to the purchaser in a separate confirmation of sale. Unless we or an agent inform you in your confirmation of sale that your security is being purchased in its original offering and sale, you may assume that you are purchasing your security in a market-making transaction.

In order to facilitate the offering of certain securities under this Registration Statement or an applicable prospectus supplement, certain persons participating in the offering of those securities may engage in transactions that stabilize, maintain or otherwise affect the price of those securities during and after the offering of those securities. Specifically, if the applicable prospectus supplement permits, the underwriters of those securities may over-allot or otherwise create a short position in those securities for their own account by selling more of those securities than have been sold to them by us and may elect to cover any such short position by purchasing those securities in the open market.

In addition, the underwriters may stabilize or maintain the price of those securities by bidding for or purchasing those securities in the open market and may impose penalty bids, under which selling concessions allowed to syndicate members or other broker-dealers participating in the offering are reclaimed if securities previously distributed in the offering are repurchased in connection with stabilization transactions or otherwise. The effect of these transactions may be to stabilize or maintain the market price of the securities at a level above that which might otherwise prevail in the open market. The imposition of a penalty bid may also affect the price of securities to the extent that it discourages resales of the securities. No representation is made as to the magnitude or effect of any such stabilization or other transactions. Such transactions, if commenced, may be discontinued at any time.

Each series of offered securities will be a new issue of securities and will have no established trading market. Any underwriters to whom offered securities are sold for public offering and sale may make a market in such offered securities, but such underwriters will not be obligated to do so and may discontinue any market-making at any time without notice. The offered securities may or may not be listed on a national securities exchange. No assurance can be given as to the liquidity or trading market for the offered securities.

The underwriters, dealers and agents, and their affiliates may be customers of, engage in transactions with, or perform services for, us and our subsidiaries in the ordinary course of business.

This prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement and any applicable pricing supplement in electronic format may be made available on the Internet sites of, or through other online services maintained by, us and/or one or more of the agents and/or dealers participating in an offering of securities, or by their affiliates. In those cases, prospective investors may be able to view offering terms online and, depending upon the particular agent or dealer, prospective investors may be allowed to place orders online.

Other than this prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement and any applicable pricing supplement in electronic format, the information on our or any agent's or dealer's web site and any information contained in any other web site maintained by any agent or dealer is not part of this prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement and any applicable pricing supplement or the registration statement of which they form a part; has not been approved or endorsed by us or by any agent or dealer in its capacity as an agent or dealer, except, in each case, with respect to the respective web site maintained by such entity; and should not be relied upon by investors.

We may from time to time offer securities directly to the public through Bear Stearns and may utilize DAiSSSM, a rules-based, proprietary, single-priced, modified Dutch Auction syndication system for the pricing and allocation of such securities. DAiSSSM allows bidders to directly participate, through Internet access to an auction site, by submitting conditional offers to buy (each, a "bid") that are subject to acceptance by the underwriter, and which may directly affect the price at which such securities are sold.

The final offering price at which securities will be sold and the allocation of securities among bidders will be based solely on the results of the auction, subject to possible stabilization activity previously described.

During an auction, DAiSSSM will present to each bidder, on a real-time basis, the clearing spread at which the offering would be sold, based on the bids submitted and not withdrawn, and whether a bidder's individual bids would be accepted, prorated or rejected. Upon completion of the auction, the offering price of the securities will be the lowest spread at which the aggregate dollar amount of bids submitted, and not removed, at that spread and lower spreads equals or exceeds the size of the offering as disclosed in the prospectus supplement which is the final clearing spread. If DAiSSSM is utilized, prior to the auction we and Bear Stearns will establish minimum admissible bids, maximum quantity restrictions and other specific rules governing the auction process, all of which will be made available to bidders in the offering cul-de-sac and described in the prospectus supplement.

Bids at a lower spread than the final clearing spread will be fully allocated. Bids at the final clearing spread will be prorated based on the time of submission and pursuant to the allocation procedures in the auction rules. Bids above the final clearing spread will receive no allocation.

If an offering is made using DAiSSSM you should review the auction rules, as displayed in the offering cul-de-sac and described in the prospectus supplement, for a more detailed description of the offering procedures.

The maximum commission or discount to be received by any NASD member or independent broker-dealer will not be greater than eight percent of the gross proceeds from the sale of any security being sold in the initial distribution.

Because Bear Stearns and BSIL are our wholly owned subsidiaries, each distribution of securities will conform to the requirements set forth in Rule 2720 of the NASD Conduct Rules. Furthermore, any underwriters offering the offered securities will not confirm sales to any accounts over which they exercise discretionary authority without the prior approval of the customer.

ERISA CONSIDERATIONS

Section 4975 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"), prohibits the borrowing of money, the sale of property and certain other transactions involving the assets of plans that are qualified under the Code ("Qualified Plans") or individual retirement accounts ("IRAs") and persons who have certain specified relationships to them. Section 406 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended ("ERISA"), prohibits similar transactions involving employee benefit plans that are subject to ERISA ("ERISA Plans"). Qualified Plans, IRAs and ERISA Plans are referred to as "Plans."

Persons who have such specified relationships are referred to as "parties in interest" under ERISA and as "disqualified persons" under the Code. "Parties in interest" and "disqualified persons" encompass a wide range of persons, including any fiduciary (for example, investment manager, trustee or custodian) of a Plan, any person providing services (for example, a broker) to a Plan, the Plan sponsor, an employee organization any of whose members are covered by the Plan, and certain persons related to or affiliated with any of the foregoing.

The purchase and/or holding of securities by a Plan with respect to which we, Bear Stearns, BSSC and/or certain of our affiliates is a fiduciary and/or a service provider (or otherwise is a "party in interest" or "disqualified person") would constitute or result in a prohibited transaction under Section 406 of ERISA or Section 4975 of the Code, unless such securities are acquired or held pursuant to and in accordance with an applicable statutory or administrative exemption. Each of us, Bear Stearns and BSSC is considered a "disqualified person" under the Code or "party in interest" under ERISA with respect to many Plans, although neither we nor Bear Stearns can be a "party in interest" to any IRA other than certain employer sponsored IRAs, as only employer sponsored IRAs are covered by ERISA.

Applicable administrative exemptions may include certain prohibited transaction class exemptions (for example, Prohibited Transaction Class Exemption ("PTCE") 8414 relating to qualified professional asset managers, PTCE 9623 relating to certain in house asset managers, PTCE 9138 relating to bank collective investment funds, PTCE 901 relating to insurance company separate accounts and PTCE 9560 relating to insurance company general accounts).

It should also be noted that the Pension Protection Act of 2006 was recently passed by Congress and contains a new statutory exemption from the prohibited transaction provisions of Section 406 of ERISA and Section 4975 of the Code for transactions involving certain parties in interest or disqualified persons who are such merely because they are a service provider to a Plan, or because they are related to a service provider. Generally, the new exemption would be applicable if the party to the transaction with the Plan is a party in interest or a disqualified person to the Plan but is not (i) an employer, (ii) a fiduciary who has or exercises any discretionary authority or control with respect to the investment of the Plan assets involved in the transaction, (iii) a fiduciary who renders investment advice (within the meaning of ERISA and Section 4975 of the Code) with respect to those assets, or (iv) an affiliate of (i), (ii) or (iii). Any Plan fiduciary relying on this new statutory exemption (Section 408(b)(17) of ERISA and Section 4975(d)(20) of the Code) and purchasing securities on behalf of a Plan will be deemed to have made a determination that the Plan is paying no more than, and is receiving no less than, adequate consideration in connection with the transaction, which is a necessary precondition to utilizing this new exemption. Any purchaser that is a Plan is encouraged to consult with counsel regarding the application of the new exemption.

A fiduciary who causes a Plan to engage, directly or indirectly, in a nonexempt prohibited transaction may be subject to a penalty under ERISA, and may be liable for any losses to the Plan resulting from such transaction. Code Section 4975 generally imposes an excise tax on disqualified persons who engage, directly or indirectly, in nonexempt transactions with the assets of Plans subject to

such Section. If an IRA engages in a prohibited transaction, the assets of the IRA are deemed to have been distributed to the IRA beneficiaries.

In accordance with ERISA's general fiduciary requirements, a fiduciary with respect to any ERISA Plan who is considering the purchase of securities on behalf of such plan should consider the foregoing information and the information set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement and any applicable pricing supplement, and should determine whether such purchase is permitted under the governing plan document and is prudent and appropriate for the ERISA Plan in view of its overall investment policy and the composition and diversification of its portfolio. Fiduciaries of Plans established with, or for which services are provided by, us, Bear Stearns, BSSC and/or certain of our affiliates should consult with counsel before making any acquisition. Each purchaser of any securities, the assets of which constitute the assets of one or more Plans, and each fiduciary that directs such purchaser with respect to the purchase or holding of such securities, will be deemed to represent that the purchase, holding and disposition of the securities does not and will not constitute a prohibited transaction under Section 406 of ERISA or Section 4975 of the Code for which an exemption is not available.

Certain employee benefit plans, such as governmental plans (as defined in Section 3(32) of ERISA) and, if no election has been made under Section 410(d) of the Code, church plans (as defined in Section 3(33) of ERISA), are not subject to Section 406 of ERISA or Section 4975 of the Code. However, such plans may be subject to the provisions of applicable federal, state or local law ("Similar Law") materially similar to the foregoing provisions of ERISA or the Code. Fiduciaries of such plans ("Similar Law Plans") should consider applicable Similar Law when investing in the securities. Each fiduciary of a Similar Law Plan will be deemed to represent that the Similar Law Plan's acquisition and holding of the securities will not result in a nonexempt violation of applicable Similar Law.

The sale of any security to a Plan or a Similar Law Plan is in no respect a representation by us or any of our affiliates that such an investment meets all relevant legal requirements with respect to investments by Plans or Similar Law Plans generally or any particular Plan or Similar Law Plan, or that such an investment is appropriate for a Plan or a Similar Law Plan generally or any particular Plan or Similar Law Plan.

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the securities will be passed upon for us by Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP, New York, New York, USA. Certain legal matters relating to the laws of England and Wales are being passed upon for us by Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP, London, England.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements, the related financial statement schedule, and management's report on the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting incorporated by reference in this Registration Statement from the Company's Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended November 30, 2005, as amended by Amendment No. 1 on Form 10-K/A, have been audited by Deloitte & Touche LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, as stated in their reports, which are incorporated herein by reference (which reports (1) express an unqualified opinion on the consolidated financial statements and related financial statement schedule and include an explanatory paragraph referring to the adoption of Statement of Financial Accounting Standards ("SFAS") No. 123, "Accounting for Stock-Based Compensation" as amended by SFAS No. 148, "Accounting for Stock-Based Compensation Transition and Disclosure, an amendment of FASB Statement No. 123," in 2003, discussed in Note 1 to the consolidated financial statements, (2) express an unqualified opinion on management's assessment regarding the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting, and (3) express an unqualified opinion on the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting), and

have been so incorporated in reliance upon the reports of such firm given upon their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

With respect to the unaudited interim financial information for the periods ended February 28, 2006 and 2005 and May 31, 2006 and 2005 which are incorporated by reference in this Registration Statement, Deloitte & Touche LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, have applied limited procedures in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) for a review of such information. However, as stated in their reports included in the Company's Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended February 28, 2006 and May 31, 2006, and incorporated by reference herein, they did not audit and they do not express an opinion on that interim financial information. Accordingly, the degree of reliance on their reports on such information should be restricted in light of the limited nature of the review procedures applied. Deloitte & Touche LLP are not subject to the liability provisions of Section 11 of the Securities Act of 1933 for their reports on the unaudited interim financial information because those reports are not a "report" or a "part" of the Registration Statement prepared or certified by Deloitte & Touche LLP within the meaning of Sections 7 and 11 of the Act.

You should only rely on the information contained in this prospectus. We have not authorized anyone to provide you with information or to make any representation to you that is not contained in this prospectus. If anyone provides you with different or inconsistent information, you should not rely on it. This is not an offer to sell these securities, nor an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted. You should not under any circumstances assume that the information in this prospectus is correct on any date after its respective dates.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prospectus

Where You Can Find More Information	1
The Bear Stearns Companies Inc.	2
Use of Proceeds	4
Description of Debt Securities	4
Description of Warrants	16
Description of Preferred Stock	21
Description of Depositary Shares	25
Description of Purchase Contracts	28
Description of Units	31
Book-Entry Procedures and Settlement	33
Limitations On Issuance Of Bearer Debt Securities And Bearer Warrants	43
Plan of Distribution	44
ERISA Considerations	48
Legal Matters	49
Experts	49

The Bear Stearns Companies Inc.

**Debt Securities
Warrants
Preferred Stock
Depositary Shares
Purchase Contracts
Units**

PROSPECTUS

Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc.

August 16, 2006

PART II**INFORMATION NOT REQUIRED IN PROSPECTUS****Item 14. Other Expenses of Issuance and Distribution.**

The following table sets forth all expenses in connection with the issuance and distribution of the securities being registered. All amounts shown are estimated, except the SEC registration fee and the NASD filing fee.

SEC registration fee		*
Trustee's fees and expenses	\$	20,000
Accounting fees		10,000
Legal fees and expenses		300,000
Printing and engraving fees		20,000
NASD filing fee		75,500
Miscellaneous		15,000

* In accordance with Rules 456(b) and 457(r) under the Securities Act, the Registrants are deferring payment of the registration fee. 440,500

Item 15. Indemnification of Directors and Officers.

Reference is made to Section 145 of the Delaware General Corporation Law which provides for indemnification of directors and officers in certain circumstances.

Article VIII of the registrant's Restated Certificate of Incorporation provides for indemnification of directors and officers of the registrant against certain liabilities incurred as a result of their duties as such and also provides for the elimination of the monetary liability of directors for certain actions as such. The registrant's Restated Certificate of Incorporation, as amended, is filed as Exhibit 4(a)(1) to the Registration Statement on Form S-3 (No. 333-57083) filed June 17, 1998, and the Certificate of Amendment of Restated Certificate of Incorporation, dated April 2, 2001, is filed as Exhibit 4(a)(2) to the Registration Statement on Form S-8 (No. 333-92357) filed June 14, 2001.

We, as registrant, have in effect reimbursement insurance for our directors' and officers' liability claims and directors' and officers' liability insurance indemnifying, respectively, ourselves and our directors and officers within specific limits for certain liabilities incurred, subject to the conditions and exclusions and deductible provisions of the policies.

For the undertaking with respect to indemnification, see Item 17 in this prospectus.

Item 16. Exhibits.

Exhibit No.	Description	Incorporated by Reference to Filings Indicated
1(a)	Form of Underwriting Agreement (Debt Securities and Warrants).	*
1(b)	Form of Distribution Agreement (Medium Term Notes).	*
1(c)	Form of Distribution Agreement (IncomeNotes SM).	*
1(d)	Form of Underwriting Agreement (Global Notes).	*

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

1(e)	Form of Underwriting Agreement (DAiSS SM Offering).	*
1(f)	Form of Underwriting Agreement (Preferred Stock).	*
4(a)(1)	Senior Indenture, dated as of May 31, 1991, between The Bear Stearns Companies Inc. and JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank).	Incorporated by reference to the similarly numbered exhibit to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-40933 on Form S-3.
4(a)(2)	Supplemental Indenture, dated as of January 29, 1998, between The Bear Stearns Companies Inc. and JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank).	Exhibit 4(a)(2) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 29, 1998.
4(a)(3)	Form of Subordinated Indenture.	*
4(b)(1)	Form of Medium-Term Note, Series B (Fixed Rate).	Exhibit 4(b)(9) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 19, 2003.
4(b)(2)	Form of Medium-Term Note, Series B (Floating Rate).	Exhibit 4(b)(10) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 20, 2003.
4(b)(3)	Form of Medium Term Note, Series C (Fixed Rate).	*
4(b)(4)	Form of Medium Term Note, Series C (Floating Rate).	*
4(b)(5)	Form of Global Note.	Exhibit 4(b)(11) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 19, 2003.
4(c)(1)	Form of Warrant Agreement, including form of Warrant Certificate, for warrants to purchase debt securities.	Exhibit 4(c)(1) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-44521.
4(c)(2)	Form of Warrant Agreement, including form of Warrant Certificate (for warrants to be sold separately from debt securities), for warrants to purchase debt securities.	Exhibit 4(c)(2) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-44521 on Form S-3.
4(c)(3)	Form of Warrant Agreement for warrants to purchase other securities, currencies or units.	Exhibit 4(c)(3) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-48829 on Form S-3.
4(d)(1)	Restated Certificate of Incorporation of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(a)(1) to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form S-3 (File No. 333-57083).

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

4(d)(2)	Certificate of Amendment of Restated Certificate of Incorporation of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(a)(2) to the Registration Statement on Form S-8 (File No. 333-92357).
4(d)(3)	Certificate of Stock Designation relating to the registrant's 6.15% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series E.	Exhibit No. 1.4 to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 14, 1998.
4(d)(4)	Certificate of Stock Designation relating to the registrant's 5.72% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series F.	Exhibit No. 1.4 to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 20, 1998.
4(d)(5)	Certificate of Stock Designation relating to the registrant's 5.49% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series G.	Exhibit No. 1.4 to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 18, 1998.
4(d)(6)	Certificate of Elimination of the Cumulative Convertible Preferred Stock, Series A; Cumulative Convertible Preferred Stock, Series B; Cumulative Convertible Preferred Stock, Series C; and Cumulative Convertible Preferred Stock, Series D of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(d)(9) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 15, 2002.
4(d)(7)	Certificate of Elimination of the 7.88% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series B of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(d)(10) to the registrant's Current Report on Form S-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 15, 2002.
4(d)(8)	Certificate of Elimination of the 7.60% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series C of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(d)(11) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 15, 2002.
4(d)(9)	Certificate of Elimination of the Adjustable Rate Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series A of the registrant.	Exhibit 4(a)(9) to the Post-Effective Amendment No. 2 to Registration Statement on Form S-8 filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on February 25, 2004.
4(d)(10)	Amended and Restated By-laws of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(d)(6) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 15, 2002.
4(d)(11)	Form of Deposit Agreement.	Exhibit 4(d) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-59140 on Form S-3.
4(d)(12)	Specimen Depositary Receipt.	Exhibit 4(e) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-59140 on Form S-3.
4(d)(13)	Form of Purchase Contract (included in Exhibit 4(d)(14)).	*

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

4(d)(14)	Form of Unit Agreement.	*	
5	Opinion of Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP.	*	
8	Opinion of Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP regarding tax issues.	*	
12	Computation of Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges and Computation of Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends.		Exhibit 12 to the registrant's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on February 13, 2006 and Exhibit 12 to the registrant's Current Reports on Form 10-Q filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 10, 2006 and July 10, 2006.
15	Letter of Deloitte & Touche LLP RE: AUDITED INTERIM FINANCIAL INFORMATION	*	
23(a)	Consent of Deloitte & Touche LLP.	*	
23(b)	Consent of Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP (included in Exhibit 5 and Exhibit 8).	*	
24	Power of attorney (included in the signature pages to the Registration Statement).	*	
25	Form T-1 Statement of Eligibility and Qualification under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939 of JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank) (separately bound).		Exhibit 25 to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form S-3 filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on December 30, 2004.

*

Filed herewith.

Item 17. Undertakings.

The undersigned registrant hereby undertakes:

(a) To file, during any period in which offers or sales are being made, a post-effective amendment to this registration statement:

(i)

To include any prospectus required by section 10(a)(3) of the Securities Act;

(ii)

To reflect in the prospectus any facts or events arising after the effective date of this registration statement (or the most recent post-effective amendment thereof) which, individually or in the aggregate, represent a fundamental change in the information set forth in this registration statement. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any increase or decrease in volume of securities offered (if the total dollar value of securities offered would not exceed that which was registered) and any deviation from the low or high end of the estimated maximum offering range may be reflected in the form of prospectus filed with the Commission pursuant to Rule 242(b) if, in the aggregate, the changes in volume and price represent no more than 20 percent change in the maximum aggregate offering price set forth in the "Calculation of Registration Fee" table in this prospectus; and

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

(iii)

To include any material information with respect to the plan of distribution not previously disclosed in this registration statement or any material change to such information in this registration statement;

provided, however, that the undertakings set forth in subparagraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) above do not apply if the information required to be included in a post-effective amendment by those subparagraphs is contained in reports filed with or furnished to the Commission by the registrant pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 that are incorporated by reference in this registration statement, or is contained in a form of prospectus filed pursuant to Rule 424(b) that is part of the registration statement.

(b) That, for the purpose of determining any liability under the Securities Act, each such post-effective amendment shall be deemed to be a new registration statement relating to the securities offered therein, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial bona fide offering thereof.

(c) To remove from registration by means of a post-effective amendment any of the securities being registered which remain unsold at the termination of the offering.

(d) That, for the purpose of determining liability under the Securities Act to any purchaser:

(A)

Each prospectus filed by the registrant pursuant to Rule 424(b)(3) shall be deemed to be part of the registration statement as of the date the filed prospectus was deemed part of and included in the registration statement; and

(B)

Each prospectus required to be filed pursuant to Rule 424(b)(2), (b)(5), or (b)(7) as part of a registration statement in reliance on Rule 430B relating to an offering made pursuant to Rule 415(a)(1)(i), (vii), or (x) for the purpose of providing the information required by section 10(a) of the Securities Act shall be deemed to be part of and included in the registration statement as of the earlier of the date such form of prospectus is first used after effectiveness or the date of the first contract of sale of securities in the offering described in the prospectus. As provided in Rule 430B, for liability purposes of the issuer and any person that is at that date an underwriter, such date shall be deemed to be a new effective date of the registration statement relating to the securities in the registration statement to which that prospectus relates, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial *bona fide* offering thereof; *provided, however*, that no statement made in a registration statement or prospectus that is part of the registration statement or made in a document incorporated or deemed incorporated by reference into the registration statement or prospectus that is part of the registration statement will, as to a purchaser with a time of contract of sale prior to such effective date, supersede or modify any statement that was made in the registration statement or prospectus that was part of the registration statement or made in any such document immediately prior to such effective date.

(e) That, for the purpose of determining liability of the registrant under the Securities Act to any purchaser in the initial distribution of the securities, the undersigned registrant undertakes that in a primary offering of securities of the undersigned registrant pursuant to this registration statement, regardless of the underwriting method used to sell the securities to the purchaser, if the securities are offered or sold to such purchaser by means of any of the following communications, the undersigned registrant will be a seller to the purchaser and will be considered to offer or sell such securities to such purchaser:

(i)

Any preliminary prospectus or prospectus of the undersigned registrant relating to the offering required to be filed pursuant to Rule 424;

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

- (ii) Any free writing prospectus relating to the offering prepared by or on behalf of the undersigned registrant or used or referred to by the undersigned registrant;
- (iii) The portion of any other free writing prospectus relating to the offering containing material information about the undersigned registrant or its securities provided by or on behalf of the undersigned registrant; and
- (iv) Any other communication that is an offer in the offering made by the undersigned registrant to the purchaser.

(f) That, for the purposes of determining any liability under the Securities Act, each filing of the registrant's annual report pursuant to section 13(a) or section 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 that is incorporated by reference in this registration statement shall be deemed to be a new Registration Statement relating to the securities offered therein, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial bona fide offering thereof.

(g) To supplement the prospectus, after the expiration of the subscription period, to set forth the results of the subscription offer, the transactions by the underwriters during the subscription period, the amount of unsubscribed securities to be purchased by the underwriters, and the terms of any subsequent reoffering thereof. If any public offering by the underwriters is to be made on terms differing from those set forth on the cover page of the prospectus, a post-effective amendment will be filed to set forth the terms of such offering.

(h) To file an application for the purpose of determining the eligibility of the trustees to act under subsection (a) of section 310 of the Trust Indenture Act in accordance with the rules and the registrant regulations prescribed by the SEC under section 305(b)(2) of the Act.

(i) Insofar as indemnification for liabilities arising under the Securities Act may be permitted to directors, officers and controlling persons of the registrant pursuant to the provisions described under Item 15 of this registration statement, or otherwise (other than insurance), the registrant has been advised that in the opinion of the SEC such indemnification is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act and is, therefore, unenforceable. In the event that a claim for indemnification against such liabilities (other than the payment by the registrant of expenses incurred or paid by a director, officer or controlling person of the registrant in the successful defense of any action, suit or proceeding) is asserted by such director, officer or controlling person, in connection with the securities being registered, the registrant will, unless in the opinion of our counsel the matter has been settled by controlling precedent, submit to a court of appropriate jurisdiction the question whether such indemnification by it is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act and will be governed by the final adjudication of such issue.

SIGNATURES

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, the registrant hereby certifies that it has reasonable grounds to believe that it meets all of the requirements for filing on Form S-3 and has duly caused this Registration Statement to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned, thereunto duly authorized, in the City of New York, State of New York, on August 16, 2006.

THE BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC.

BY: /s/ SAMUEL L. MOLINARO JR.

Samuel L. Molinaro Jr.
Executive Vice President and
Chief Financial Officer

We, the undersigned officers and directors of The Bear Stearns Companies Inc., hereby severally constitute, James E. Cayne, Alan D. Schwartz, Warren I. Spector and Samuel L. Molinaro Jr., and any of them singly, our true and lawful attorneys with full power to them, and each of them singly, to sign for us and in our name in the capacities indicated below, any and all amendments (including post-effective amendments) to this Registration Statement on Form S-3 filed by The Bear Stearns Companies Inc. with the Securities and Exchange Commission (and any additional Registration Statement related hereto permitted by Rule 462(b) promulgated under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (and all further amendments, including post-effective amendments, thereto)), and generally to do all such things in our name and on our behalf in such capacities to enable The Bear Stearns Companies Inc. to comply with the provisions of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and all requirements of the Securities and Exchange Commission, and we hereby ratify and confirm our signatures as they may be signed by our said attorneys, or any of them, to any and all such amendments.

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, this Registration Statement has been signed by the following persons in the capacities indicated on August 16, 2006.

Signature	Title
<hr/>	<hr/>
/s/ JAMES E. CAYNE	Chairman of the Board, Chief Executive Officer (Principal Executive Officer) and Director
<hr/>	
James E. Cayne	
<hr/>	
Henry S. Bienen	Director
<hr/>	
/s/ CARL D. GLICKMAN	Chairman of the Executive Committee and Director
<hr/>	
Carl D. Glickman	
<hr/>	
/s/ ALAN C. GREENBERG	Director
<hr/>	
Alan C. Greenberg	

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

<hr/> <p>Donald J. Harrington</p>	Director
<p>/s/ FRANK T. NICKELL</p> <hr/> <p>Frank T. Nickell</p>	Director
<p>/s/ PAUL A. NOVELLY</p> <hr/> <p>Paul A. Novelly</p>	Director
<p>/s/ FREDERIC V. SALERNO</p> <hr/> <p>Frederic V. Salerno</p>	Director
<p>/s/ ALAN D. SCHWARTZ</p> <hr/> <p>Alan D. Schwartz</p>	President, Co-Chief Operating Officer and Director
<p>/s/ WARREN J. SPECTOR</p> <hr/> <p>Warren J. Spector</p>	President, Co-Chief Operating Officer and Director
<p>/s/ VINCENT TESE</p> <hr/> <p>Vincent Tese</p>	Director
<p>/s/ WESLEY S. WILLIAMS, JR.</p> <hr/> <p>Wesley S. Williams, Jr.</p>	Director
<p>/s/ SAMUEL L. MOLINARO JR.</p> <hr/> <p>Samuel L. Molinaro Jr.</p>	Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (Principal Financial Officer)
<p>/s/ JEFFREY M. FARBER</p> <hr/> <p>Jeffrey M. Farber</p>	Controller (Principal Accounting Officer)

EXHIBIT INDEX

Exhibit No.	Description	Incorporated by Reference to Filings Indicated
1(a)	Form of Underwriting Agreement (Debt Securities and Warrants).	*
1(b)	Form of Distribution Agreement (Medium Term Notes).	*
1(c)	Form of Distribution Agreement (IncomeNotesSM).	*
1(d)	Form of Underwriting Agreement (Global Notes).	*
1(e)	Form of Underwriting Agreement (DAiSSSM Offering).	*
1(f)	Form of Underwriting Agreement (Preferred Stock).	*
4(a)(1)	Senior Indenture, dated as of May 31, 1991, between The Bear Stearns Companies Inc. and JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank).	Incorporated by reference to the similarly numbered exhibit to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-40933 on Form S-3.
4(a)(2)	Supplemental Indenture, dated as of January 29, 1998, between The Bear Stearns Companies Inc. and JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank).	Exhibit 4(a)(2) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 29, 1998.
4(a)(3)	Form of Subordinated Indenture.	*
4(b)(1)	Form of Medium-Term Note, Series B (Fixed Rate).	Exhibit 4(b)(9) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 19, 2003.
4(b)(2)	Form of Medium-Term Note, Series B (Floating Rate).	Exhibit 4(b)(10) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 20, 2003.
4(b)(3)	Form of Medium Term Note, Series C (Fixed Rate).	*
4(b)(4)	Form of Medium Term Note, Series C (Floating Rate).	*
4(b)(5)	Form of Global Note.	Exhibit 4(b)(11) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 19, 2003.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

4(c)(1)	Form of Warrant Agreement, including form of Warrant Certificate, for warrants to purchase debt securities.	Exhibit 4(c)(1) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-44521.
4(c)(2)	Form of Warrant Agreement, including form of Warrant Certificate (for warrants to be sold separately from debt securities), for warrants to purchase debt securities.	Exhibit 4(c)(2) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-44521 on Form S-3.
4(c)(3)	Form of Warrant Agreement for warrants to purchase other securities, currencies or units.	Exhibit 4(c)(3) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-48829 on Form S-3.
4(d)(1)	Restated Certificate of Incorporation of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(a)(1) to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form S-3 (File No. 333-57083).
4(d)(2)	Certificate of Amendment of Restated Certificate of Incorporation of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(a)(2) to the Registration Statement on Form S-8 (File No. 333-92357).
4(d)(3)	Certificate of Stock Designation relating to the registrant's 6.15% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series E.	Exhibit No. 1.4 to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 14, 1998.
4(d)(4)	Certificate of Stock Designation relating to the registrant's 5.72% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series F.	Exhibit No. 1.4 to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 20, 1998.
4(d)(5)	Certificate of Stock Designation relating to the registrant's 5.49% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series G.	Exhibit No. 1.4 to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 18, 1998.
4(d)(6)	Certificate of Elimination of the Cumulative Convertible Preferred Stock, Series A; Cumulative Convertible Preferred Stock, Series B; Cumulative Convertible Preferred Stock, Series C; and Cumulative Convertible Preferred Stock, Series D of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(d)(9) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 15, 2002.
4(d)(7)	Certificate of Elimination of the 7.88% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series B of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(d)(10) to the registrant's Current Report on Form S-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 15, 2002.
4(d)(8)	Certificate of Elimination of the 7.60% Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series C of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(d)(11) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 15, 2002.

Edgar Filing: BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC - Form S-3ASR

4(d)(9)	Certificate of Elimination of the Adjustable Rate Cumulative Preferred Stock, Series A of the registrant.	Exhibit 4(a)(9) to the Post-Effective Amendment No. 2 to Registration Statement on Form S-8 filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on February 25, 2004.
4(d)(10)	Amended and Restated By-laws of the registrant.	Exhibit No. 4(d)(6) to the registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on January 15, 2002.
4(d)(11)	Form of Deposit Agreement.	Exhibit 4(d) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-59140 on Form S-3.
4(d)(12)	Specimen Depository Receipt.	Exhibit 4(e) to the registrant's Registration Statement No. 33-59140 on Form S-3.
4(d)(13)	Form of Purchase Contract (included in Exhibit 4(d)(14)).	*
4(d)(14)	Form of Unit Agreement.	*
5	Opinion of Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP.	*
8	Opinion of Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP regarding tax issues.	*
12	Computation of Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges and Computation of Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends.	Exhibit 12 to the registrant's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on February 13, 2006 and Exhibit 12 to the registrant's Current Reports on Form 10-Q filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 10, 2006 and July 10, 2006.
15	Letter of Deloitte & Touche LLP RE: AUDITED INTERIM FINANCIAL INFORMATION	*
23(a)	Consent of Deloitte & Touche LLP.	*
23(b)	Consent of Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP (included in Exhibit 5 and Exhibit 8).	*
24	Power of attorney (included in the signature pages to the Registration Statement).	*
25	Form T-1 Statement of Eligibility and Qualification under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939 of JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (formerly, The Chase Manhattan Bank) (separately bound).	Exhibit 25 to the registrant's Registration Statement on Form S-3 filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on December 30, 2004.

*

Filed herewith.

QuickLinks

[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

[WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION](#)

[THE BEAR STEARNS COMPANIES INC.](#)

[USE OF PROCEEDS](#)

[DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES](#)

[DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS](#)

[DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK](#)

[DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITARY SHARES](#)

[DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASE CONTRACTS](#)

[DESCRIPTION OF UNITS](#)

[BOOK-ENTRY PROCEDURES AND SETTLEMENT](#)

[PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION](#)

[ERISA CONSIDERATIONS](#)

[LEGAL MATTERS](#)

[EXPERTS](#)

[PART II INFORMATION NOT REQUIRED IN PROSPECTUS](#)

[SIGNATURES](#)

[EXHIBIT INDEX](#)