

SUMMARY: The proposed information collection requirement described below will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act. The Department is soliciting public comments on the subject proposal.

DATES: Comments due date: April 27, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments regarding this proposal. Comments should refer to the proposal by name and/or OMB Control Number and should be sent to: Oliver Walker, Reports Liaison Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street, SW, Room 9152, Washington, DC 20410.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Contact person, Stuart Margulies, telephone number 202-708-6409 (this is not a toll-free number) for copies of the proposed forms and other available documents.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Department is submitting the proposed information collection to OMB for review, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended).

This notice is soliciting comments from members of the public and affecting agencies concerning the proposed collection of information to: (1) Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (3) enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond; including through the use of appropriate automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

This notice also lists the following information:

Title of Proposal: Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards Act Reporting Requirements.

OMB Control Number, if applicable: 2502-0253.

Description of the need for the information and proposed use: Agency form numbers, if applicable: This information is a requirement under the National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act (the Act) 42 U.S.C. 5400 *et seq.*, Public Law 93-383 and authorizes HUD to

establish construction and safety standards for manufactured (mobile) homes and to enforce these standards. To meet these requirements HUD requires the manufacturer to maintain complete records of all information that may indicate the existence of a problem in a manufactured home for which the manufacturer is responsible for providing notification and correction as required by 24 CFR 3282.403.

Members of affected public: Manufacturer, distributor and dealer of manufactured housing.

Estimation of the total numbers of hours needed to prepare the information collection including number of respondents, frequency of response, and hours of response: 338,950 total annual hours are estimated for 402 respondents. The frequency of reporting is one per home for manufacturer/retailer and the hours of response 1,441,500 hours of response.

Status of the proposed information collection: reinstatement without change.

Authority: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended.

Dated: February 18, 1998.

Nicolas P. Retsinas,

A/S Secretary for Housing-Federal Housing Commissioner.

[FR Doc. 98-4720 Filed 2-24-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4210-27-M

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[Docket No. FR-4295-N-01]

Notice of Operating Cost Adjustment Factors for Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Projects Assisted With Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, HUD.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990 ("LIHPHA") requires that future rent adjustments for LIHPHA projects be made by applying an annual factor to be determined by the Secretary to the portion of rent attributable to operating expenses for the project and, where the owner is a priority purchaser, to the portion of rent attributable to project oversight costs. This notice announces Operating Cost Adjustment Factors ("OCAF(s)"), to be used for rent increases under LIHPHA, which are based on a formula using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that measure

changes in wages and the costs of non-food consumer goods. The most recent published OCAF will be applied on the anniversary date of the housing assistance payments contract. An explanation of the methodology employed to develop the OCAFs is set forth below.

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 1, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ulyses Brinkley, Office of Multifamily Housing Management, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20410; telephone (202) 708-0558; (This is not a toll-free number). A telecommunications device for hearing- and speech-impaired individuals (TTY) is available at 1-800-877-8339 (Federal Information Relay Service).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. OCAFs

The Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990 ("LIHPHA") (see, in particular, section 222(a)(2)(G)(i) of LIHPHA, 12 U.S.C. 4112(a)(2)(G) and the regulations at 24 CFR 248.145(a)(9)) requires that future rent adjustments for LIHPHA projects be made by applying an annual factor to be determined by the Secretary to the portion of project rent attributable to operating expenses for the project and, where the owner is a priority purchaser, to the portion of project rent attributable to project oversight costs. The Secretary has determined to use the OCAF as the annual factor.

II. Budget-Based Method of Calculating Contract Rent Increases

If an owner believes that the contract rents approved by the Secretary pursuant to the OCAF are not adequate, an owner may request that its contract rent increase be calculated using the budget-based method. Owners shall: (1) Submit documentation to HUD pursuant to the procedures in Chapter 7 of HUD Handbook 4350.1, Insured Project Servicing Handbook, and (2) demonstrate that an increase in contract rents above that provided by the OCAF is necessary to reflect extraordinary necessary expenses of owning and maintaining the Housing. If the Secretary determines that the project rents pursuant to the OCAF are insufficient to cover project operating expenses, the Secretary may increase contract rents in excess of the amount determined pursuant to the OCAF to reflect extraordinary necessary expenses of owning and maintaining the project. Any contract rent increase resulting

from using the budget-based method shall be effective for the year approved.

III. Method for Calculating OCAF

In seeking to find the best operating cost adjustment factors for this purpose, the Department analyzed several sources of data. HUD's own data on rental project operating costs formed the largest and most reliable set of time-series data on actual project expenses. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data on wages and prices were found to offer the most reliable surrogate data sources.

After exploring alternative approaches, two methods of developing OCAFs were considered for detailed review. One was to use administrative and operating expense data for unsubsidized FHA-insured projects as the basis for developing factors. The other was to use BLS data on wages and prices as a surrogate indicator of operating cost changes.

An analysis of the HUD FHA data from the Form HUD-92410 showed that utility, tax, and insurance expenses had such a high degree of variability that measurements of area- or regional-level average or median expense changes had little relevance to most projects, and that these data could not be used to provide meaningful measures of change. Analysis efforts were therefore concentrated on the "Administrative" and "Operating and Maintenance" expense items reported on the HUD 92410. It was found that a large percentage of FHA-insured, unassisted projects had unusual changes in year-to-year administrative and operating costs, possibly due to expensing of major repairs using reserve funds that are transferred into the operating expense account. This is of concern, since using operating expense change factors that partly reflect unspecified inclusions of reserve expenditures means that the data do not provide a good indicator of normal, on-going operating expenses or of changes in those expenses. This also appears to explain why change factors developed using FHA-insured administrative and operating expense data do not have a significant central grouping tendency, but instead are spread relatively evenly over a wide range of values. Use of an average or median value has less meaning in such situations than it normally does, since only a few projects have values near the average.

Starting in 1993, HUD began to collect more detailed budget information for all FHA-insured projects, including information on funds transferred from project reserves to cover work reported as operating and maintenance expenses. In future years, this information may make it feasible to develop reliable OCAFs based on costs incurred by unassisted, FHA-insured projects. The Department intends to re-examine the feasibility of this approach as more data become available, but believes that actual operating expense data are not a reliable basis for developing OCAFs at this time and does not intend to use these data to calculate OCAFs.

The second option studied takes advantage of the fact that nearly all administrative and operating expenses are either labor-related or are tied to the cost of non-food producer goods. Labor-related costs should normally tend to move with regional changes in wages, while the cost of most producer goods should change in a similar manner throughout the country. The cost of changes in goods used in administrative and maintenance work can be measured by the BLS Producer Price Index. Wage and employment data are collected on a comprehensive and highly reliable basis by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). HUD uses BLS wage data in calculating median family income levels, and it uses BLS government wage data as the main determinant of the annual increases for Public Housing Allowed Expense Levels.

Research on Public Housing program administrative and operating expenses has shown that approximately 60 percent of such expenses are labor-related and 40 percent are tied to purchased goods. Since 1983 HUD has used this 60-percent-wage/40-percent-price-index ratio to update Public Housing Allowed Operating Expenses. The approach has been the subject of research and has been found to work well. It was used to develop OCAF factors that measure changes in "Administrative" and "Operating and Maintenance" expenses, as follows:

OCAF = (60%*BLS private sector wage change + 40%*BLS non-food PPI change) * (avg. operating and maintenance costs/avg. non-debt service costs)

The FY 1998 OCAF figures, shown on the accompanying appendix, were

produced for the metropolitan and nonmetropolitan area parts of each of the ten HUD Regions using the BLS data from the final annual ES-202 series data on employment and wages. This is the same level of geography used for Section 8 Annual Adjustment Factors (AAFs), and has the advantage of capturing regional economic trends while avoiding the sometimes erratic changes that would result from use of more localized data. Future OCAF factors will be published on an annual basis.

IV. Findings and Certifications

Environmental Impact

In accordance with 24 CFR 50.19(c)(6) of the HUD regulations, the policies and procedures contained in this notice set forth rate determinations and related external administrative requirements and procedures which do not constitute a development decision that affects the physical condition of specific project areas or building sites, and therefore are categorically excluded from the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Executive Order 12612, Federalism

The General Counsel, as the Designated Official under section 6(a) of Executive Order 12612, Federalism, has determined that the policies contained in this notice will not have substantial direct effects on States or their political subdivisions, or the relationship between the Federal government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. As a result, the notice is not subject to review under the Order. This notice pertains to Operating Cost Adjustment Factors ("OCAF(s)"), to be used for rent increases under LIHPHA, and does not substantially alter the established roles of the Department, the States, and local governments.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number for this program is 14.187.

Date: January 23, 1998.

Andrew Cuomo,
Secretary.

APPENDIX—LOW INCOME HOUSING PRESERVATION AND RESIDENT HOMEOWNERSHIP ACT OF 1990
[FY 1998 Operating Cost Adjustment Factors]

HUD region	Area	Total (percent)	Metro (percent)	Nonmetro (percent)
1	NEW ENGLAND	1.0	1.1	0.9
2	NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY	1.0	1.0	0.2
3	MID-ATLANTIC	1.2	1.2	0.8
4	SOUTHEAST	1.3	1.2	1.6
5	MIDWEST	1.4	1.4	1.5
6	SOUTHWEST	1.0	1.1	0.7
7	GREAT PLAINS	1.2	1.1	1.7
8	ROCKY MOUNTAINS	1.7	1.7	1.6
9	PACIFIC/HAWAII	1.2	1.2	1.7
10	NORTHWEST/ALASKA	0.8	0.8	6.4
U.S. TOTAL	1.1	1.1	1.3

[FR Doc. 98-4717 Filed 2-24-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4210-27-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

North Belts Travel Plan/Magpie-Confederate Vegetation Restoration Project; Including Timber Harvest, Prescribed Fire, Watershed Improvement, Road Reconstruction and Obliteration, Trail Relocation, and Travel Management

Travel management will be addressed on both Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management jurisdictions. Bureau of Land Management, Butte District, Headwaters Resource Area, Helena National Forest, Broadwater, Lewis & Clark, and Meagher Counties, Montana. **AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA/Bureau of Land Management, USDI.

ACTION: Notice; intent to prepare Environmental Impact Statement and a BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP) amendment.

SUMMARY: The USDA, Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management USDI are gathering information and preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the North Belts Travel Plan/Magpie-Confederate Vegetation Restoration Project located approximately 25 air miles east of Helena, Montana.

The Forest Service proposes to treat forested areas with approximately 1480 acres of commercial timber harvest and 3725 acres of prescribed fire. An estimated three miles of new construction and three miles of road reconstruction will be needed to access the treatment areas. All new construction will be obliterated

following harvest. Prescribed fire is also proposed for 6452 acres of grasslands (315 acres of which belong to the BLM). The Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service propose to develop long-term travel management plans for the northern Big Belt Mountains and Spokane Hills. The proposal includes corrective measures to facilitate watershed improvement and reduce or eliminate various problems on existing roads and trails. The proposed action would implement new travel management plans that identify designated routes which would be available for motorized vehicle use with a mix of seasonal and vehicle type restrictions.

The proposal is designed to help achieve the goals and objectives of the 1986 Helena National Forest Plan, move selected areas towards the desired conditions identified from the Forest Plan, and BLM Headwaters Resource Management Plan of 1984. These needs are supported by the findings of the Big Belts Integrated Resource Analysis. The purpose is to maintain healthy, sustainable ecosystems that (1) reduce fire risk, (2) provide wildlife habitat similar to the habitat that existed when fire was a natural component of the ecosystem, (3) enhance soil and water, (4) provide recreation opportunities, and (5) provide reasonable long-term travel management.

No Forest Plan amendments are proposed. Further analysis of the proposed action and alternatives to the proposal may result in a decision(s) that include amendments to the Forest Plan. Amendments to the BLM Headwaters Resource Management Plan are expected to be identified and therefore plan amendment procedures will be followed from the onset.

DATES: Comments should be received in writing on or before March 31, 1998.

ADDRESSES: The responsible official for the USDA Forest Service is Thomas J.

Clifford, Forest Supervisor, Helena National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 2880 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT 59601. Phone: (406) 449-5201. The responsible official for the USDI Bureau of Land Management is Merle Good, Headwaters Resource Area Manager, Butte District Office, P.O. Box 3388, Butte, Montana 59702.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

George Weldon, District Ranger, Townsend Ranger District, or Quinn Carver, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Townsend Ranger District, 415 S. Front, Townsend, MT 59644. Phone: (406) 266-3425.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The project would occur on Bureau of Land Management lands of the Butte District and National Forest lands of the Helena and Townsend Ranger Districts. The activities would take place within portions of T.11, T.12 and 13N., R.2W., T.9-13N., R.1W., T.10-13N., R.1E., T.9-12N., R.2E., and T.9-11N., R.3E., Montana Principle Meridian.

Portions of the timber harvest and prescribed fire treatment units are within the Hellgate Gulch and Cayuse Mountain roadless areas. No road construction is proposed within either roadless area.

The decisions to be made, based on this environmental analysis, are:

1. Whether or not to treat the vegetation at this time, and if so, how would the treatments be accomplished.

2. What type of transportation systems will be necessary to accommodate the long-term needs of the public while considering other resource needs and objectives.

This EIS will tier to the Helena Forest Plan Final EIS of April 1986 and the BLM Headwaters Resource Management Plan of 1984, which provide program goals, objectives, and standards and