

Issued in Burlington, Massachusetts, on March 13, 2013.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

24 CFR Part 203

[Docket No. FR-5658-N-01]

Federal Housing Administration (FHA): Direct Endorsement Program Solicitation of Comment on Timeframe for Conducting Pre-Endorsement Review

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Housing—Federal Housing Commissioner, HUD.

ACTION: Request for comments.

SUMMARY: HUD is seeking comment on moving the timeframe that FHA conducts its pre-endorsement review of loans originated by Direct Endorsement lenders from a time that is prior to the lender closing each loan and before FHA's endorsement of the mortgage for insurance to a period after the loan has been closed. Comment is sought on whether this shift in time, as further described in this document, would reduce the processing time before the loans may be closed, and facilitate loan closing.

DATES: *Comment Due Date.* April 22, 2013.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments regarding this rule to the Regulations Division, Office of General Counsel, 451 7th Street SW., Room 10276, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, DC 20410-0500. There are two methods for submitting public comments. All submissions must refer to the above docket number and title.

1. *Submission of Comments by Mail.* Comments may be submitted by mail to the Regulations Division, Office of General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street, SW., Room 10276, Washington, DC 20410-0500.

2. *Electronic Submission of Comments.* Interested persons may submit comments electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. HUD strongly encourages commenters to submit comments electronically. Electronic submission of comments allows the commenter maximum time to prepare

and submit a comment, ensures timely receipt by HUD, and enables HUD to make them immediately available to the public. Comments submitted electronically through the www.regulations.gov Web site can be viewed by other commenters and interested members of the public. Commenters should follow the instructions provided on that site to submit comments electronically.

Note: To receive consideration as public comments, comments must be submitted through one of the two methods specified above. Again, all submissions must refer to the docket number and title of the notice.

No Facsimile Comments. Facsimile (FAX) comments are not acceptable.

Public Inspection of Public Comments. All properly submitted comments and communications submitted to HUD will be available for public inspection and copying between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Eastern Time, weekdays at the above address. Due to security measures at the HUD Headquarters building, an advance appointment to review the public comments must be scheduled by calling the Regulations Division at 202-708-3055 (this is not a toll-free number). Individuals with speech or hearing impairments may access this number through TTY by calling the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339 (this is a toll-free number). Copies of all comments submitted are available for inspection and downloading at www.regulations.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joy Hadley, Director, Office of Lender Activities and Program Compliance, Office of Housing, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 490 L'Enfant Plaza East SW., Room P3214, Washington, DC 20024-8000; telephone number 202-708-1515 (this is not a toll-free number). Persons with hearing or speech impairments may access this number through TTY by calling the toll-free Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

FHA grants lenders unconditional Direct Endorsement authority to close loans without prior FHA approval in accordance with the terms and conditions of HUD's regulations in 24 CFR 203.3. Under the Direct Endorsement program, the lender underwrites and closes the mortgage loan without prior FHA review or approval. Before being granted unconditional Direct Endorsement authority, the lender must submit a specified number of loan files for review

and approval by FHA as described in 24 CFR 203.3(b)(4). The regulations provide for the review of each loan file to be conducted by FHA, and the lender to be notified of the acceptability of the mortgage, prior to FHA endorsement of the mortgage for insurance. The Direct Endorsement program has been designed to give the lender sufficient certainty of FHA endorsement requirements to justify the assumption of the responsibilities involved in originating and closing mortgage loans without prior FHA review.

At present, FHA generally conducts this review of the loan files required under 24 CFR 203.3(b)(4) prior to closing and, if acceptable, issues a commitment to the lender at that time. After closing, the mortgage is then submitted to FHA for endorsement for insurance. While this is the general procedure utilized by lenders seeking unconditional Direct Endorsement approval, FHA currently allows lenders to close the loans before submission for review. A lender is eligible for unconditional Direct Endorsement authority once FHA has reviewed and found acceptable the requisite number of loan files, at either pre-closing or pre-endorsement review, provided that the lender has met the other requirements for Direct Endorsement approval under 24 CFR 203.3.

II. This Request for Comments

Proposed Transition of FHA's Review to Post-Closing, Pre-Endorsement

Through this document FHA proposes for consideration and public comment shifting the timeframe for FHA's review of loans prior to endorsement from pre-closing to post-closing. FHA proposes that a lender applying for unconditional Direct Endorsement authority submit the loan files required under 24 CFR 203.3(b)(4) only after closing. After determining that the mortgage is acceptable and meets all FHA requirements, FHA will notify the lender that the loan has been endorsed.

Feedback is sought on whether the proposed change in review time would benefit the lender by reducing the amount of time between loan origination and closing, and would result in operational savings of time and costs associated with approval timeframes, which FHA recognizes can be lengthy at times. Feedback is also sought on whether the proposed change in review time would benefit the borrower; that is, would the borrower be able to take advantage of shorter interest rate lock-in periods, which could help to ensure that the borrower receives the

best interest rate available at the lowest possible cost to the borrower.

The proposed change in review time should not alter the current quality of review of the loan file or the quality of the Direct Endorsement lender approval process. FHA guidance, issued in accordance with 24 CFR 203.3(b)(2), already requires the lender to certify that their underwriter(s) have the qualifications, expertise, and experience to underwrite mortgage loans in accordance with FHA requirements. Given the certification required of lenders, the shift in the timeframe for review may in fact result in enhanced lender accountability; that is, the lender will place more emphasis on ensuring that their underwriting staff is sufficiently trained prior to requesting Direct Endorsement authority. Properly trained underwriters will help to increase the number of loans that are found to be acceptable, resulting in an even higher percentage of loan files that meet FHA policies and guidelines.

FHA analyzed data for mortgage loans that were submitted for review during the period beginning October 1, 2009 through June 30, 2012. The data demonstrated that 86.7 percent of all loans reviewed during this time period, and 90.5 percent of all loans reviewed year to date in FY 2012, were found to meet FHA policies and guidelines and were subsequently endorsed. In addition, of the lenders entering the Direct Endorsement review process during the October 1, 2009 through June 30, 2012 timeframe, 48.6 percent did not receive an unacceptable rating on any loan submitted for review, while 28 percent of lenders had only one loan rated unacceptable and 10.9 percent of lenders had two loans rated unacceptable. Overall, 87.4 percent of lenders had two or fewer loans rated unacceptable. Currently, in FY 2012, the percentage of lenders with two or fewer loans rated unacceptable has increased to 93.3 percent and is expected to continue to improve.

When material violations of FHA policies and procedures are uncovered during the loan file review, FHA will notify the lender that a preliminary assessment, based on file documentation, indicates that the loan contains material findings such that FHA is exposed to an unacceptable level of risk. FHA will provide the lender with an opportunity to present missing information or documentation to address the review findings and permit subsequent submission for endorsement. As is the current practice, if the lender is unable to adequately respond (or fails to respond) to the material findings, FHA will notify the

lender that the loan is not eligible for endorsement.

The lender will have satisfied the pre-endorsement review requirements necessary to be approved for unconditional Direct Endorsement authority once FHA has reviewed and found acceptable the requisite number of loan files pursuant to 24 CFR 203.3(b)(4).

III. Solicitation of Comment

Comment is solicited on the proposed shift in the timeframe for conducting its pre-endorsement review of the loans originated by prospective Direct Endorsement lenders from prior to the lender closing each loan to before FHA's endorsement of the mortgage for insurance. Comment is also solicited on other proposals that would reduce the processing time and facilitate loan closing.

Dated: March 12, 2013.

Carol J. Galante,

Assistant Secretary for Housing—Federal Housing Commissioner.

[FR Doc. 2013-06110 Filed 3-20-13; 8:45 am]

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 52

[EPA-R10-OAR-2011-0884, FRL- 9791-7]

Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Oregon: Infrastructure Requirements for the 1997 and 2006 Fine Particulate Matter and 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The EPA is proposing to approve the State Implementation Plan (SIP) submittals from the State of Oregon to demonstrate that the SIP meets the infrastructure requirements of the Clean Air Act (CAA) for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) promulgated for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) on July 18, 1997 and October 17, 2006, and for ozone on March 12, 2008. The EPA is proposing to find that the Federally-approved provisions currently in the Oregon SIP meet the CAA infrastructure requirements for the 1997 PM_{2.5}, 2006 PM_{2.5}, and the 2008 ozone NAAQS. The EPA is also proposing to find that the Federally-approved provisions currently in the Oregon SIP meet the interstate transport requirements of the CAA

related to prevention of significant deterioration for the 2008 ozone NAAQS, and related to visibility for the 2006 PM_{2.5} and 2008 ozone NAAQS. This action does not propose to approve any additional provisions into the Oregon SIP but is a proposed finding that the current provisions of the Oregon SIP are adequate to satisfy the above-mentioned infrastructure elements required by the CAA.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before April 22, 2013.

ADDRESSES: Submit your comments, identified by Docket ID No. EPA-R10-OAR-2011-0884, by any of the following methods:

- www.regulations.gov: Follow the on-line instructions for submitting comments.

- **Email:** R10-

Public Comments@epa.gov.

- **Mail:** Kristin Hall, EPA Region 10, Office of Air, Waste and Toxics (AWT-107), 1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900, Seattle WA 98101.

- **Hand Delivery/Courier:** EPA Region 10 Mailroom, 9th Floor, 1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900, Seattle, WA 98101. Attention: Kristin Hall, Office of Air, Waste and Toxics, AWT-107. Such deliveries are only accepted during normal hours of operation, and special arrangements should be made for deliveries of boxed information.

Instructions: Direct your comments to Docket ID No. EPA-R10-OAR-2011-0884. The EPA's policy is that all comments received will be included in the public docket without change and may be made available online at www.regulations.gov, including any personal information provided, unless the comment includes information claimed to be Confidential Business Information (CBI) or other information the disclosure of which is restricted by statute. Do not submit information that you consider to be CBI or otherwise protected through www.regulations.gov or email. The www.regulations.gov Web site is an "anonymous access" system, which means the EPA will not know your identity or contact information unless you provide it in the body of your comment. If you send an email comment directly to the EPA without going through www.regulations.gov your email address will be automatically captured and included as part of the comment that is placed in the public docket and made available on the Internet. If you submit an electronic comment, the EPA recommends that you include your name and other contact information in the body of your comment and with any disk or CD-ROM you submit. If the EPA cannot read your