

persons are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Farm Service Agency

Title: Emergency Conservation Program and Biomass Crop Assistance Program.

OMB Control Number: 0560-0082.

Summary of Collection: The Farm Service Agency (FSA), in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Forest Service, and other agencies and organizations, provides eligible producers and landowners cost-share incentives and technical assistance through several conservation and environmental programs to help farmers, ranchers, and other eligible landowners and operators conserve soil, improve water quality, develop forests, and rehabilitate farmland severely damaged by natural disasters. The authorities to collect information for this collection are found under the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2201-2205), which provides emergency funds for sharing with agricultural producers the cost of rehabilitating farmland damaged by natural disaster, and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures during periods of severe drought. FSA is also managing the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) authorized by Section 9010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-79), which amends Title 1X of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. BCAP regulations outlined the legislations parameters, program definitions and process or: (1) Establishing BCAP project areas; (2) Matching payment opportunity for eligible material wners and qualifying biomass conversion facilities; (3) Contracting acreage for producers in BCAP project areas; and (4) Establishment and annual production payments for producers in CAP projects areas.

Need and use of the Information: FSA will collect information using several forms. The collected information will be used to determine if the person, land, and practices are eligible for participation in the respective program and to receive cost-share assistance. Information collection from eligible biomass owners, biomass conversion facilities, and producers meeting the requirements for matching payments, annual production payment assistance, establishment payments and BCAP project area designation is necessary in order to ensure the financial accountability needed to operate and administer the BCAP. Without the

information, FSA will not be able to make eligibility determinations and compute payments in a timely manner.

Description of Respondents: Farms.

Number of Respondents: 70,000.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting: Annually.

Total burden hours: 77,763.

Ruth Brown,

Departmental Information Collection Clearance Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

March 8, 2018.

The Department of Agriculture has submitted the following information collection requirement(s) to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13. Comments are requested regarding (1) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments regarding this information collection received by April 12, 2018 will be considered. Written comments should be addressed to: Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), New Executive Office Building, 725 17th Street NW, Washington, DC 20502. Commenters are encouraged to submit their comments to OMB via email to: OIRA_Submission@OMB.EOP.GOV or fax (202) 395-5806 and to Departmental Clearance Office, USDA, OCIO, Mail Stop 7602, Washington, DC 20250-7602. Copies of the submission(s) may be obtained by calling (202) 720-8958.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number and the agency informs potential persons who are to respond to

the collection of information that such persons are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Rural Utilities Service

Title: 7 CFR 1726, Electric System Construction Policies and Procedures—Electric.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0107.

Summary of Collection: The Rural Electrification Act of 1936, 7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*, as amended, (RE ACT) in Sec. 4 (7 U.S.C. 904) authorizes and empowers the Administrator of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to make loans in the several States and Territories of the United States for rural electrification and the furnishing and improving of electric energy to persons in rural areas. These loans are for a term of up to 35 years and are secured by a first mortgage on the borrower's electric system. In the interest of protecting loan security and accomplishing the statutory objective of a sound program of rural electrification, Section 4 of the RE Act further requires that RUS make or guarantee a loan only if there is reasonable assurance that the loan, together with all outstanding loans and obligations of the borrower, will be repaid in full within the time agreed. RUS will collect information using various RUS forms.

Need and Use of the Information: RUS will collect information to implement certain provisions of the RUS standard form of loan documents regarding the borrower's purchase of materials and equipment and the construction of its electric system by contract or force account. The use of standard forms and procurement procedures helps assure RUS that appropriate standards and specifications are maintained; agency loan security is not adversely affected; and loan and loan guarantee funds are used effectively and for the intended purposes. The information will be used by RUS electric borrowers, their contractors and by RUS. If standard forms were not used, borrowers would need to prepare their own documents at a significant expense; and each document submitted by a borrower would require extensive and costly review by both RUS and the Office of the General Counsel.

Description of Respondents: Not-for-profit institutions; Business or other for-profit.

Number of Respondents: 817.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting: On occasion.

Total Burden Hours: 78.

Rural Utility Service

Title: 7 CFR 1780, Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program.

OMB Control Number: 0572–0121.

Summary of Collection: Section 306 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (CONACT), 7 U.S.C. 1926, authorizes Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to make loans and grants to public entities, federally-recognized American Indian tribes, and nonprofit corporations. The loans and grants fund the development of drinking water waste water, solid waste disposal, and storm wastewater disposal facilities in rural areas with populations of up to 10,000 residents.

Need and Use of the Information: Rural Development's field offices will collect information from applicants/borrowers and consultants to determine eligibility and project feasibility. The information will help to ensure borrowers operate on a sound basis and use loan funds for authorized purposes. There are agency forms required as well as other requirements that involve certifications from the borrower, lenders, and other parties. Failure to collect proper information could result in improper determinations of eligibility, use of funds and or unsound loans.

Description of Respondents: State, Local or Tribal Government; Not-for-profit institutions.

Number of Respondents: 865.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting: On occasion.

Total Burden Hours: 150,339.

Rural Utility Service

Title: Servicing of Water Programs Loans and Grants.

OMB Control Number: 0572–0137.

Summary of Collection: Authority for servicing of Water Programs Loan and Grants is contained in Section 306e of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, as amended. The information collected covers loan and grant servicing regulations, 7 CFR part 1782, which prescribes policies and responsibilities for servicing actions necessary in connection with Water and Environmental Programs (WEP) loans and grants. WEP provides loans, guaranteed loans and grants for water, sewer, storm water, and solid waste disposal facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 10,000 people.

Need and Use of the Information: The Rural Utilities Service will collect information using various forms. The collected information for the most part is financial in nature and needed by the Agency to determine if borrowers, based on their individual situations, qualify

for the various servicing authorities. Servicing actions become necessary due to the development of financial or other problems and may be initiated by either a recipient which recognizes that a problem exists and wished to resolve it, or by the Agency. If a problem exists, a recipient must furnish financial information which is used to aid in resolving the problem through re-amortization, sale, transfer, debt restructuring, liquidation, or other means provided in the regulations.

Description of Respondents: Business or other for-profit; non-profit institutions; State and local governments.

Number of Respondents: 62.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting: On occasion.

Total Burden Hours: 729.

Ruth Brown,

Departmental Information Collection Clearance Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Office of the Secretary****Strengthening Civil Rights Management**

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, USDA.

ACTION: Request for Information (RFI).

SUMMARY: Consistent with Executive Order 13781, “Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch,” and using the authority of the Secretary to reorganize the Department under section 4(a) of Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is soliciting public comment on a proposed realignment of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR), which will improve customer service, better align functions within the organization, and ensure improved consistency, resource management, and strategic decision-making.

DATES: Comments and information are requested on or before March 25, 2018.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments regarding this notice. All submissions must refer to “Improving Civil Rights” to ensure proper delivery.

• *Electronic Submission of Comments.* Interested persons may submit comments electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. USDA strongly encourages commenters to submit comments electronically. Electronic

submission of comments allows the commenter maximum time to prepare and submit a comment, and ensures timely receipt by USDA. Commenters should follow the instructions provided on that site to submit comments electronically.

• *Submission of Comments by Mail, Hand Delivery, or Courier.* Paper, disk, or CD–ROM submissions should be submitted to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, USDA, Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 507–W, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Winona Lake Scott, Telephone Number: (202) 720–3808, winona.scott@osec.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: USDA is committed to operating efficiently, effectively, and with integrity, and minimizing the burdens on individuals, businesses, and communities for participation in and compliance with USDA programs. USDA works to support the American agricultural economy to strengthen rural communities; to protect and conserve our natural resources; and to provide a safe, sufficient, and nutritious food supply for the American people. The Department's wide range of programs and responsibilities touches the lives of every American every day.

I. Executive Order 13781

Executive Order 13781, “Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch”, is intended to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of the executive branch. The principles in the Executive Order provide the basis for taking actions to enhance and strengthen the delivery of USDA programs.

II. Reorganization Actions

On March 9, 2018, Secretary Perdue will be announcing his intent to take actions to strengthen civil rights and customer service at USDA by taking the following actions to ensure integrity, consistency, and fairness:

• USDA will eliminate inefficiencies in delivering civil rights services at the agency and staff office level, thereby resulting in improved civil rights management. Under the realignment, a Civil Rights Director and appropriate Equal Opportunity staff will be aligned as follows:

- (1) Departmental Administration, staff offices, and Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs will share civil rights resources;
- (2) Each remaining Departmental Mission Area will consolidate its sub-