

best use the scoping input, comments must be received by March 10, 2008. Include name, address, and title of the project with your comments.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review: A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45-day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21)

Dated: January 18, 2008.

Nancy S. Larson,

LaCroix District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 08-335 Filed 1-25-08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Housing Service

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Notice of Request for Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCIES: Rural Housing Service and Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed collection; comments requested.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the intention of the above-named Agencies to request an extension for the currently approved information collection in support of the servicing of Community and Direct Business Programs Loans and Grants.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by March 28, 2008 to be assured of consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Beth Jones, Senior Loan Specialist, Community Programs Direct Loans and Grants Processing and Servicing, RHS, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 0787, Washington, DC 20250-0787, Telephone (202) 720-1498, E-mail: beth.jones@wdc.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: 7 CFR 1951-E, Servicing of Community and Direct Business Programs Loans and Grants.

OMB Number: 0575-0066.

Expiration Date of Approval: June 30, 2008.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The Community Facilities program is authorized to make loans and grants to public entities, nonprofit corporations, and Indian tribes for the development of essential community facilities primarily serving rural residents. The Direct Business and Industry program, under Rural Business-Cooperative Service, is authorized to make loans to improve, develop, or finance business, industry, and employment, and improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities.

The purpose of this collection is to establish security servicing policies, assist recipients in meeting the objectives of the loans and grants, repay loans on schedule, comply with agreements, and protect the Government's financial interest. Routine servicing responsibilities include collection of payments, compliance reviews, security inspections, review of financial reports, determining applicant/borrower eligibility and project feasibility for various servicing actions, monitoring delinquent accounts, and supervision activities.

Supervision by the Agencies include, but is not limited to: review of budgets, management reports, audits and financial statements; performing security inspections; providing, arranging, or recommending technical assistance; evaluating environmental impacts of proposed actions by the borrower; performing civil rights compliance reviews; and assisting in the development of workout agreements.

Information will be collected by the field offices from applicants, borrowers, consultants, lenders, and attorneys.

Failure to collect information could result in improper servicing of these loans.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response.

Respondents: State, local or tribal Governments, Not-for-profit institutions, businesses, and individuals.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 587.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 2.

Estimated Number of Responses: 1,094.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 1,042.

Copies of the information collection can be obtained from Cheryl Thompson, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, at (202) 692-0043.

Comments: Comments are invited on:

(a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agencies, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agencies' estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) 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 may be sent to Cheryl Thompson, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, 7th Floor, Room 701, 300 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20024. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: January 18, 2008.

Russell T. Davis,

Administrator, Rural Housing Service.

Ben Anderson,

Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service.

[FR Doc. E8-1354 Filed 1-25-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-XV-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Announcement of Grant Application Deadlines and Funding Levels for the Assistance to High Energy Cost Rural Communities

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of funding availability (NOFA).

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service, an agency delivering the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Utilities Programs, hereinafter referred to as Rural Development and/or the Agency, announces the availability of \$6.8 million in Fiscal Year 2008 for competitive grants to assist communities with extremely high energy costs. This grant program is authorized under section 19 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (RE Act) (7 U.S.C. 918a) and program regulations at 7 CFR part 1709. The grant funds may be used to acquire, construct, extend, upgrade, or otherwise improve energy generation, transmission, or distribution facilities serving communities in which the average residential expenditure for home energy exceeds 275 percent of the national average. Eligible applicants include persons, States, political subdivisions of States, and other entities organized under State law. Federally-recognized Indian tribes and tribal entities are eligible applicants. This notice describes the eligibility and application requirements, the criteria that will be used by the Agency to award funding, and information on how to obtain application materials. All grants awarded under this NOFA are contingent on the availability of

appropriated funds. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number for this program is 10.859. You may obtain the application guide and materials for the Assistance to High Energy Cost Rural Communities Grant Program via the Internet at the following Web site: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/electric/>. You may also request the application guide and materials from USDA Rural Development by contacting the individual listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this notice.

DATES: You may submit completed grant applications on paper or electronically according to the following deadlines:

- Paper applications must be postmarked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight, *no later* than March 28, 2008 or hand delivered to the Agency by this deadline, to be eligible for under this NOFA. Late or incomplete applications will not be eligible for FY 2008 grant funding.

- Electronic applications must be submitted through *Grants.gov* *no later* than March 28, 2008 to be eligible under this NOFA for FY 2008 grant funding. Late or incomplete electronic applications will not be eligible.

- Applications will be accepted on publication of this notice.

ADDRESSES: You may submit completed applications for grants on paper or electronically to the following addresses:

- Paper applications are to be submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Electric Program, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 1560, Room 5165 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1560. Applications should be marked "Attention: High Energy Cost Community Grant Program."
- Applications may be submitted electronically through *Grants.gov*. Information on how to submit applications electronically is available on the *Grants.gov* Web site (<http://www.Grants.gov>). Applicants must successfully pre-register with *Grants.gov* to use the electronic applications option. Application information may be downloaded from *Grants.gov* without pre-registration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karen Larsen, Management Analyst, United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Electric Program, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 1560, Room 5165 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1560. Telephone 202-720-9545, Fax 202-690-0717, e-mail energy.grants@wdc.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview Information

Federal Agency Name: United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Utilities Programs, Assistant Administrator, Electric Programs.

Funding Opportunity Title: Assistance to High Energy Cost Rural Communities.

Announcement Type: Initial announcement.

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-RD-RUS-HECG07.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.859. The CFDA title for this program is "Assistance to High Energy Cost Rural Communities."

Dates: Applications must be postmarked and mailed or shipped, or hand delivered to the Agency, or filed with *Grants.gov* by March 28, 2008.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Rural Development is making available \$6.8 million in competitive grants under section 19 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (the "RE Act") (7 U.S.C. 918a). Under section 19, the Agency Administrator is authorized to make grants to "acquire, construct, extend, upgrade, and otherwise improve energy generation, transmission, or distribution facilities" serving extremely high energy cost communities. Eligible communities are those in which the average residential expenditure for home energy is at least 275 percent of the national average residential expenditure for home energy under one or more of the benchmarks published in this notice. Program regulations are codified at 7 CFR part 1709.

The purpose of this grant program is provide financial assistance for a broad range of energy facilities, equipment and related activities to offset the impacts of extremely high residential energy costs on eligible communities. Grant funds may be used to purchase, construct, extend, repair, upgrade and otherwise improve energy generation, transmission, or distribution facilities serving eligible communities. Eligible facilities include on-grid and off-grid renewable energy systems and implementation of cost-effective demand side management and energy conservation programs that benefit eligible communities. Grant funds may not be used to pay utility bills or to purchase fuel. Grant projects under this program must provide community benefits and not be for the sole benefit of an individual applicant, household, or business.

Eligible applicants include for-profit and non-profit businesses, cooperatives,