

§ 904.507

15 CFR Ch. IX (1-1-11 Edition)

referred to the U.S. Department of Justice for institution of judicial proceedings, and until the proceedings are completed, any petition received by NOAA will be forwarded to the U.S. Department of Justice for consideration.

(4) A false statement in a petition will subject petitioner to prosecution under 18 U.S.C. 1001.

(c) *Investigation.* NOAA will investigate the facts and circumstances shown by the petition and seizure, and may in this respect appoint an investigator to examine the facts and prepare a report of investigation.

(d) *Determination of petition.* (1) After investigation under paragraph (c) of this section, NOAA will make a determination on the matter and notify the petitioner. NOAA may remit or mitigate the forfeiture, on such terms and conditions as are deemed reasonable and just under the applicable statute and the circumstances.

(2) Unless NOAA determines no valid purpose would be served, NOAA will condition a determination to remit or mitigate a forfeiture upon the petitioner's submission of an agreement, in a form satisfactory to NOAA, to hold the United States and its officers or agents harmless from any and all claims based on loss of or damage to the seized property or that might result from grant of remission or mitigation and restoration of proceeds. If the petitioner is not the beneficial owner of the property, or if there are others with a proprietary interest in the property, NOAA may require the petitioner to submit such an agreement executed by the beneficial owner or other interested party. NOAA may also require that the property be promptly exported from the United States.

(e) *Compliance with the determination.* A determination by NOAA to remit or mitigate the forfeiture and restore the proceeds upon stated conditions, as upon payment of a specified amount, will be effective for 60 days after the date of the determination. If the petitioner does not comply with the conditions within that period in a manner prescribed by the determination, or make arrangements satisfactory to NOAA for later compliance, the remission or mitigation and restoration of proceeds will be void, and judicial or

administrative forfeiture proceedings will be instituted or resumed.

(f) *Appropriated property.* If forfeited property that is the subject of a claim for restoration of proceeds has been appropriated for official use, retention by the U.S. Government will be regarded as a sale for the purposes of this section.

§ 904.507 Recovery of certain storage costs.

If any fish, wildlife, or evidentiary property is seized and forfeited under the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531 through 1543, any person whose act or omission was the basis for the seizure may be charged a reasonable fee for expenses to the United States connected with the transfer, board, handling or storage of such property. If any fish or wildlife is seized in connection with a violation of the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981, 16 U.S.C. 3371 through 3378, or any property is seized in connection with a violation of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801 through 1882, any person convicted thereof, or assessed a civil penalty therefor, may be assessed a reasonable fee for expenses of the United States connected with the storage, care and maintenance of such property. Within a reasonable time after forfeiture, NOAA will send to such person by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, a bill for such fee. The bill will contain an itemized statement of the applicable costs, and instructions on the time and manner of payment. Payment must be made in accordance with the bill. If the recipient of the bill objects to the reasonableness of the costs assessed he or she may, within 30 days of receipt, file written objections with NOAA at the address stated in the bill. NOAA will promptly review the written objections and within 30 days mail the final determination to the party who filed them. NOAA's determination will constitute final agency action on the matter.

§ 904.508 Voluntary forfeiture by abandonment.

(a) The owner of seized property may voluntarily forfeit all right, title, and interest in the property by abandoning

it to NOAA. Voluntary forfeiture by abandonment under this section may be accomplished by various means, including, but not limited to: expressly waiving any claim to the property by voluntarily relinquishing any right, title, and interest by written agreement or otherwise; or refusing or otherwise avoiding delivery of returned property; or failing to respond within 90 days of service of any certified or registered notice regarding a return of seized property issued under §904.510(b).

(b) Property will be declared finally forfeited by abandonment, without recourse, upon a finding of abandonment by NOAA.

§904.509 Disposal of forfeited property.

(a) *Delivery to Administrator.* Upon forfeiture of any fish, wildlife, parts or products thereof, or other property to the United States, including the abandonment or waiver of any claim to any such property, it will be delivered to NOAA for storage or disposal according to the provisions of this section.

(b) *Disposal.* Disposal may be accomplished by one of the following means unless the property is the subject of a petition for remission or mitigation of forfeiture or disposed of by court order:

- (1) Return to the wild;
- (2) Use by NOAA or transfer to another government agency for official use;
- (3) Donation or loan;
- (4) Sale; or
- (5) Destruction.

(c) *Purposes of disposal.* Disposal procedures may be used to alleviate overcrowding of evidence storage facilities; to avoid the accumulation of seized property where disposal is not otherwise accomplished by court order; to address the needs of governmental agencies and other institutions and organizations for such property for scientific, educational, and public display purposes; and for other valid reasons. In no case will property be used for personal purposes, either by loan recipients or government personnel.

(d) *Disposal of evidence.* Property that is evidence may be disposed of only after authorization by the NOAA Office of General Counsel. Disposal approval usually will not be given until the case

involving the evidence is closed, except that perishable property may be authorized for disposal sooner.

(e) *Loans—(1) To institutions.* Property approved for disposal may be loaned to institutions or organizations requesting such property for scientific, educational, or public display purposes. Property will be loaned only after execution of a loan agreement which provides, among other things, that the loaned property will be used only for noncommercial scientific, educational, or public display purposes, and that it will remain the property of the U.S. Government, which may demand its return at any time. Parties requesting the loan of property must demonstrate the ability to provide adequate care and security for the property. Loans may be made to responsible agencies of foreign governments in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

(2) *To individuals.* Property generally will not be loaned to individuals not affiliated with an institution or organization unless it is clear that the property will be used in a noncommercial manner, and for scientific, educational, or public display purposes which are in the public interest.

(3) *Selection of loan recipients.* Recipients of property will be chosen so as to assure a wide distribution of the property throughout the scientific, educational, public display and museum communities. Other branches of NMFS, NOAA, the Department of Commerce, and other governmental agencies will have the right of first refusal of any property offered for disposal. The Administrator may solicit applications, by publication of a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER, from qualified persons, institutions, and organizations who are interested in obtaining the property being offered. Such notice will contain a statement as to the availability of specific property for which transferees are being sought, and instructions on how and where to make application. Applications will be granted in the following order: other offices of NMFS, NOAA, and the Department of Commerce; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;