

(b) The reviewing official has the exclusive authority to compromise or settle a case under this subpart at any time after the date on which the reviewing official is permitted to issue a complaint and before the date on which the ALJ issues a decision.

(c) The judicial officer has exclusive authority to compromise or settle a case under this subpart at any time after the date on which the ALJ issues a decision, except during the pendency of any appeal under § 1.341 of this part or during the pendency of any action to collect penalties and assessments under § 1.342 of this part.

(d) The Attorney General has exclusive authority to compromise or settle a case under this subpart during the pendency of any appeal under § 1.341 of this part, or any action to recover penalties and assessments under § 1.342 of this part.

(e) The investigating official may recommend settlement terms to the reviewing official, the judicial officer, or the Attorney General, as appropriate. The reviewing official may recommend settlement terms to the judicial officer, or the Attorney General, as appropriate.

(f) Any settlement must be in writing.

§ 1.346 Limitation.

The complaint referred to in § 1.307 of this part with respect to a claim or statement must be served in the manner specified in § 1.308 of this part within 6 years after the date on which such claim or statement is made.

Subpart M—Rules of Practice Governing Adjudication of Sourcing Area Applications and Formal Review of Sourcing Areas Pursuant to the Forest Resources Conservation and Shortage Relief Act of 1990 (16 U.S.C. 620 *et seq.*)

AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 556 and 16 U.S.C. 620 *et seq.*

SOURCE: 59 FR 8824, Feb. 24, 1994, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1.410 Meaning of words.

As used in these procedures, words in the singular form shall be deemed to import the plural, and vice versa, as the circumstance may require.

§ 1.411 Definitions.

As used in these procedures, the terms as defined in the Forest Resources Conservation and Shortage Relief Act of 1990, 16 U.S.C. 620 *et seq.* (Act) and in the regulations issued thereunder, shall apply with equal force and effect. In addition and except as may be provided otherwise in these procedures:

(a) *Applicant* or *Sourcing area applicant* means a person who submits a sourcing area application pursuant to these rules, or a person who sourcing area is subject to formal review pursuant to 36 CFR 223.191(e).

(b) *Decision* means:

(1) The Judge's initial decision made in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 554, 556, 557, and 16 U.S.C. 620 *et seq.* and 36 CFR 223.190 and 223.191(e), which includes the Judge's findings and conclusions and the reasons or basis therefore on all material issues of fact, law or discretion, orders and rulings on proposed findings, conclusions and orders submitted by the parties; and

(2) The decision and order by the Judicial officer upon appeal of the Judge's decision.

(c) *Determination* is synonymous with *decision*.

(d) *Hearing* means that part of the proceeding which may be requested by a party of record, and which involves the submission of additional evidence before the Administrative Law Judge for the record in the proceeding.

(e) *Hearing Clerk* means the Office of the Hearing Clerk, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

(f) *Judge* means any Administrative Law Judge Appointed pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3105 and assigned to the proceeding involved.

(g) *Judicial Officer* means an official of the United States Department of Agriculture delegated authority by the Secretary of Agriculture, pursuant to the Act of April 4, 1940 (7 U.S.C. 450c-459g) and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. 1988 ed., appendix, p.

§ 1.412

1280), to perform the function involved (7 CFR 235(a)), or the Secretary of Agriculture, if the authority so delegated is exercised by the Secretary.

(h) *Party of record* or *Party* is a party to the proceeding to determine approval or disapproval of a sourcing area application, including the proceeding for formal review of a sourcing area. The sourcing area applicant and persons who submit written comments on the sourcing area application at issue during the 30 calendar day comment period, including the Regional Forester, are the parties of record. For purposes of a formal review of a sourcing area, the holder of the sourcing area that is the subject of the review and persons who submit written comments on the sourcing area application at issue during the 30 calendar day comment period after institution of the formal review, including the Regional Forester, are the parties of record.

(i) *Sourcing Area Application* means the application by which a person applies for a sourcing area or the application by which a sourcing area holder applies for a formal review of a sourcing area.

§ 1.412 Institution of proceedings.

(a) *Sourcing area applications.* The proceeding for determining sourcing areas shall be instituted by receipt of a sourcing area application by the Office of Administrative Law Judges, pursuant to 36 CFR 223.190.

(b) *Review of sourcing areas.* Informal review of a sourcing area precedes institution of a formal review as follows:

(1) *Request by Sourcing area holder.* A sourcing area holder who wishes to begin a review of a sourcing area shall send a written request for a review to the Regional Forester of the region in which the manufacturing facility being sourced is located. The request shall state the reason for the request.

(i) *Informal review.* The Regional Forester shall begin an informal review, pursuant to 36 CFR 223.191(e), based on the written request. If no agreement is reached in the informal review process, the Regional Forester of the region in which the manufacturing facility being sourced is located shall transmit to the Office of Administrative Law Judges

7 CFR Subtitle A (1–1–20 Edition)

any submissions received during the informal review process, within 5 working days of the meeting convened during the informal review (36 CFR 223.191(e)). Agreement is reached when all persons attending the meeting convened by the Regional Forester to resolve differences as to the proper sourcing area, including the Regional Forester, sign the document describing the sourcing area.

(ii) *Formal review.* Institution by a sourcing area holder of a formal review of the sourcing area occurs if the informal review process does not result in agreement among the parties, and the sourcing area holder submits a sourcing area application to the Office of the Administrative Law Judges, pursuant to 36 CFR 223.190, within 10 working days after the meeting convened by the Regional Forester as part of the informal process.

(2) *Initiation of review by agency.* If the Forest Service wishes to begin a review of a sourcing area, the Regional Forester of the region in which the manufacturing facility being sourced is located shall begin an informal review, pursuant to 36 CFR 223.191(e). If no agreement is reached in the informal review process, the Regional Forester of the region in which the manufacturing facility being sourced is located shall transmit to the Office of Administrative Law Judges any submissions received during the informal review process, within 5 working days of the meeting convened during the informal review (36 CFR 223.191(e)). Agreement is reached when all persons attending the meeting convened by the Regional Forester to resolve differences as to the proper sourcing area, including the Regional Forester, sign the document describing the sourcing area. Institution by the Forest Service of a formal review of a sourcing area occurs when the Office of Administrative Law Judges receives the papers and documents submitted during the informal review process.

§ 1.413 Submission of a sourcing area application.

A sourcing area applicant shall send the application to the Office of Administrative Law Judges and shall, simultaneously, send a copy of the sourcing

area application to the Forest Service Regional Forester of the region in which the manufacturing facility being sourced is located. Where the sourcing area application will cover purchases from more than one agency, application is to be made to the agency from which the applicant expects to purchase the preponderance of its Federal timber. The sourcing area applicant must also send a complete copy of the application to each agency concerned. The lead agency shall make the decision in consultation with, and upon co-signature of, the other agency(ies) concerned. Sourcing area applications must be signed by the persons making the request, or in the case of a corporation, by its chief executive officer, and must be notarized. The application shall be on company letterhead.

§ 1.414 Docket number.

Each proceeding, following its institution, shall be assigned a docket number by the Hearing Clerk, and thereafter the proceeding shall be referred to by such number. The Hearing Clerk shall notify the sourcing area applicant and the Regional Forester to whom the applicant submitted a copy of the application of the docket number and the name of the Judge to whom the case has been assigned. In a formal review of a sourcing area instituted by the Forest Service, the Hearing Clerk shall inform the sourcing area holder whose sourcing area is subject to the review and the Regional Forester who submitted the comments instituting the formal review of the docket number and the name of the Judge to whom the case has been assigned.

§ 1.415 Notification of proceedings.

The Regional Forester of the region in which the manufacturing facility being sourced is located shall notify prospective parties of the sourcing area application and/or the formal review of a sourcing area after receipt of the docket number and the name of the Judge to whom the proceeding has been assigned, pursuant to § 1.414 of these rules. Notification will consist of publication of a notice in newspapers of general circulation in the area included in the sourcing area application. The Regional Forester shall promptly notify

the Hearing Clerk of the date of the publication and the notice. Additional notification will be made through agency mailing lists. Notification shall include the docket number, the name of the Judge to whom the case has been assigned and the mailing address of the Judge. In the case of a sourcing area review, notification will also state the reason for the review.

§ 1.416 Comment period.

Written comments on a sourcing area application or on a formal review of a sourcing area shall include the docket number and may be submitted to the Judge for 30 calendar days following publication of the notice. Persons submitting comments shall send a copy of the comments to the Regional Forester of the region in which the manufacturing facility being sourced is located. All comments must be received by the Judge and by the Regional Forester by the 30th day of the comment period.

§ 1.417 Review period.

(a) *Review of comments.* The sourcing area applicant, the sourcing area holder whose sourcing area is the subject of a formal review and other parties who submitted written comments will be allowed 10 working days from the close of the comment period to review the written comments at the Regional Forester's office during regular business hours.

(b) *Recommendation to Judge to approve or disapprove a sourcing area application.* During the 10 working day review period, parties who have submitted written comments on an application or on a formal review of a sourcing area may submit a written recommendation to the Judge, including an analysis of the facts and law as to why the Judge should approve or disapprove that application. A sourcing area applicant whose sourcing area application is the subject of the proceeding, and a sourcing area holder whose sourcing area is the subject of a formal review, may also submit a written recommendation to the Judge. The recommendation must be postmarked no later than the 10th working day of the review period.

§ 1.418

(c) *Request for a hearing.* The sourcing area applicant, the sourcing area holder whose sourcing area is the subject of a formal review and persons who submitted written comments, or the attorney of record for a party in the proceeding, may review the comments and request a hearing within 10 working days after the comment period, pursuant to 36 CFR 233.190(h)(2). The request must be postmarked no later than the 10th working day of the review period. An attorney may file an appearance of record prior to the scheduled hearing. The request for a hearing shall be filed with the Judge. The hearing is for the purpose of supplementing the written record submitted prior to the hearing. The written record submitted prior to the hearing consists of papers and documents submitted during the 30 calendar day comment period, the 10 working day review period, and any motions submitted before the hearing. For purposes of a formal review of a sourcing area, the written record also consists of the papers and documents submitted during the informal review.

(1) *Contents of the notice of hearing.* The Judge shall issue a notice of hearing regarding a particular sourcing area application or regarding formal review of a sourcing area application or regarding formal review of a sourcing area to all parties of record for that application or formal review. The notice of hearing shall contain a reference to the authority under which the sourcing area is proposed or formally reviewed; shall define the scope of the hearing; shall contain a reference to the sourcing area that is the subject of the hearing; and shall state the date, time and place of such hearing; and shall state the date, time and place of such hearing; which shall be set with due regard for the necessity and convenience of the parties of record or their representatives. The Judge shall schedule a hearing no later than 21 calendar days after the 10 working day period for reviewing written comments ends. The Judge may consolidate requests for a hearing regarding the same application.

(2) *Giving notice of hearing.* The notice of hearing shall be served upon the parties of record for the sourcing area application at issue by the Hearing Clerk.

7 CFR Subtitle A (1-1-20 Edition)

§ 1.418 Procedure upon no request for hearing.

If no hearing is requested by a party of record, the Judge shall issue an initial decision based on the written record and without further procedure or hearing. If no hearing is requested, the written record consists of papers and documents submitted during the 30-day comment period, the 10-day review period, and includes motions submitted before the Judge issues an initial decision. For purposes of a formal review of a sourcing area, the written record also consists of the papers and documents submitted during the informal review. Copies of the decision shall be served by the Hearing Clerk upon each of the parties of record.

§ 1.419 Amendment of a sourcing area application.

The sourcing area applicant may move to amend the sourcing area application with clarifying and technical amendments at any time prior to the Judge's initial determination if there is no hearing, or prior to the close of the hearing if there is a hearing.

§ 1.420 Consent recommendation.

Any time before the Judge files the decision, the parties of record may enter a consent recommendation. Such consent recommendation shall be filed with the Hearing Clerk, signed by the parties with appropriate space for signature by the Judge. The consent recommendation shall contain an admission of the jurisdictional facts, the factual and legal basis for the recommended sourcing area, the consent to the issuance of the recommended decision as the final decision of the agency without further procedure and such other admissions or statements as may be recommended by the parties. The Judge shall review the recommendation to determine whether such recommendation conforms with the Forest Resources Conservation and Shortage Relief Act of 1990 (16 U.S.C. 620, *et seq.*), 36 CFR 223.190, 36 CFR 223.191(e) and these procedures. If the recommendation conforms to the aforementioned Act, regulations, and procedures, the Judge may enter such decision without further procedure, unless an error is apparent on the face of the

document. If the Judge enters the decision, such decision shall have the same force and effect as a decision issued after full hearing and shall become final upon issuance to become effective in accordance with the terms of the decision.

§ 1.421 Prehearing conferences and procedures.

(a) *Purpose and scope.* (1) Upon motion of a party of record or upon the Judge's own motion, the Judge may direct the parties or their counsel to attend a conference at any reasonable time, prior to or during the course of the hearing, when the Judge finds that the proceeding would be expedited by a prehearing conference. Reasonable notice of the time and place of the conference shall be given. The Judge may order each of the parties to furnish at or subsequent to the conference any or all of the following:

- (i) An outline of a party's position;
- (ii) The facts upon which the party will rely;
- (iii) The legal theories upon which the party will rely;
- (iv) Copies of or a list of documents which the party anticipates introducing at the hearing; and
- (v) A list of anticipated witnesses who will testify on behalf of the party. At the discretion of the party furnishing such list of witnesses, the names of the witnesses need not be furnished if they are otherwise identified in some meaningful way such as a short statement of the type of evidence they will offer.

(2) The Judge shall not order any of the foregoing procedures that a party can show is inappropriate or unwarranted under the circumstances of the particular determination.

(3) At the conference, the following matters shall be considered:

- (i) The simplification of issues;
- (ii) The possibility of obtaining stipulations of facts and of the authenticity, accuracy, and admissibility of documents, which will avoid unnecessary proof;
- (iii) The limitation of the number of expert or other witnesses;
- (iv) Negotiation, compromise, or settlement of issues;

(v) The exchange of copies of proposed exhibits;

(vi) The identification of documents or matters of which official notice may be requested;

(vii) A schedule to be followed by the parties for completion of the actions decided at the conference; and

(viii) Such other matters as may expedite and aid in the disposition of the proceeding.

(b) *Reporting.* A prehearing conference will not be stenographically reported unless so directed by the Judge.

(c) *Action in lieu of personal attendance at a conference.* In the event the Judge concludes that personal attendance by the Judge and the parties or counsel at a prehearing conference is unwarranted or impracticable, but determines that a conference would expedite the proceeding, the Judge may conduct such conference by telephone or correspondence.

(d) *Order.* Actions taken as a result of a conference shall be reduced to an appropriate written order, unless the Judge concludes that a stenographic report shall suffice, or if the Judge elects to make a statement on the record at the hearing summarizing the actions taken.

§ 1.422 Conduct of the hearing.

(a) *Time and place.* The hearing shall be held at the time and place fixed in the notice of hearing. If any change in the time or place of the hearing is made, the Judge shall file with the Hearing Clerk a notice of such change, which notice shall be served upon the parties, unless it is made during the course of an oral script, or actual notice is given to the parties.

(b) *Appearances.* The parties may appear in person or by attorney of record in the proceeding. Any party who desires to be heard in person shall, before proceeding to testify, state his name, address, and occupation. If any such person is appearing through counsel, such person or such counsel shall, before proceeding to testify or otherwise to participate in the hearing, state for the record the authority to act as such counsel or representative, and the names, addresses, and occupations of such person and such counsel. Any such person or such counsel shall give such

§ 1.422

7 CFR Subtitle A (1-1-20 Edition)

other information respecting his appearance as the Judge may request. Any person who appears as counsel must conform to the standards of ethical conduct required of practitioners before the courts of the United States.

(c) *Failure to appear.* A party of record who, after being duly notified, fails to appear at the hearing without good cause, shall be deemed to have waived the right to an oral hearing in the proceeding. Failure to appear at a hearing shall not be deemed to be a waiver of the right to be served with a copy of the Judge's decision.

(d) *Order of proceeding.* The Judge shall determine the order in which the parties shall proceed.

(e) *Evidence*—(1) *In general.* (i) The testimony of witnesses at a hearing shall be on oath or affirmation and shall be subject to cross-examination. Cross-examination shall be permitted to the extent required for a full and true disclosure of the facts. The Judge may require that testimony on one issue raised by numerous parties be heard at one time.

(ii) Upon a finding of good cause, the Judge may order that any witness be examined separately and apart from all other witnesses except those who may be parties to the proceeding.

(iii) After a witness has testified on direct examination, any other party may request and obtain the production of any statement, or part thereof, of such witness in the possession of the party who called the witness, which relates to the subject matter as to which the witness has testified. Such production shall be made according to the procedures and subject to the definitions and limitations prescribed in the Jencks Act (18 U.S.C. 3500).

(iv) Evidence which is immaterial, or unduly repetitious, or which is not of the sort upon which responsible persons are accustomed to rely, shall be excluded insofar as practicable.

(2) *Objections.* (i) If a party objects to the admission of any evidence or to the limitation of the scope of any examination or cross-examination or to any other ruling of the Judge, the party shall state briefly the grounds of such objection, whereupon an automatic exception will follow if the objection is overruled by the Judge.

(ii) Only objections made before the Judge may subsequently be relied upon in the proceeding.

(3) *Depositions.* The deposition of any witness shall be admitted in the manner provided in and subject to the provisions of § 1.228 of these procedures.

(4) *Exhibits.* Unless the Judge finds that the furnishing of copies is impracticable, two copies of each exhibit shall be filed with the Judge. The party submitting the exhibit shall serve on every other party of record a copy of the exhibit, pursuant to § 1.427(c) of these procedures. A true copy of an exhibit may be substituted for the original.

(5) *Official records or documents.* An official government record or document or entry therein, if admissible for any purpose, shall be admissible in evidence without the production of the person who made or prepared the same, and shall be prima facie evidence of the relevant facts stated therein. Such record or document shall be evidenced by an official publication thereof or a copy certified by a person having legal authority to make such certification.

(6) *Official notice.* Official notice shall be taken of such matters as are judicially noted by the courts of the United States and of any other matter of technical, scientific, or commercial fact of established character: *Provided*, That the parties shall be given adequate notice of matters so noticed, and shall be given adequate opportunity to show that such facts are erroneously noticed.

(7) *Offer of proof.* Whenever evidence is excluded by the Judge, the party offering such evidence may make an offer of proof, which shall be included in the transcript. The offer of proof shall consist of a brief statement describing the evidence excluded. If the evidence consists of a brief oral statement, it shall be included in the transcript in toto. If the evidence consists of an exhibit, it shall be marked for identification and inserted in the hearing record.

(f) *Transcript.* Hearings shall be recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts thereof shall be made available to any person, at actual cost of duplication (5 U.S.C. App. 2, section 11).

§ 1.423 Post-hearing procedure.

(a) *Corrections to transcript.* (1) Within the period of time fixed by the Judge, any party may file a motion proposing corrections to the transcript.

(2) Unless a party files such motion in the manner prescribed, the transcript shall be presumed, except for obvious typographical errors, to be complete.

(3) As soon as practicable after the close of the hearing and after consideration of any timely objections filed as to the transcript, the Judge shall issue an order making any corrections to the transcript which the Judge finds are warranted, which corrections shall be entered onto the original transcript by the Hearing Clerk (without obscuring the original text).

(b) *Proposed findings of fact, conclusions, order, and brief.* Prior to the close of the hearing, each party may submit for consideration proposed findings of fact, conclusions, order, and brief in support thereof. A copy of each such document filed by a party shall be served upon each of the other parties.

(c) *Judge's decision.* (1) The Judge may, upon motion of any party or in his or her own discretion, issue a decision orally at the close of the hearing, or within 10 calendar days after the close of the hearing, or within 10 calendar days after submission of the record, if no hearing is requested.

(2) If the decision is announced orally, a copy thereof, excerpted from the transcript of the record, shall be furnished to the parties by the Hearing Clerk. Irrespective of the date such copy is mailed, the issuance date of the decision shall be the date the oral decision was announced.

(3) If the decision is in writing, it shall be filed with the Hearing Clerk and served upon the parties as provided in § 1.427.

(4) The Judge's decision shall become effective without further proceedings 21 calendar days after the issuance of the decision, if announced orally at the hearing, or if the decision is in writing, 21 calendar days after the date of service thereof upon the respondent, unless there is an appeal to the Judicial Officer by a party to the proceeding pursuant to § 1.426; *Provided, however*, that no decision shall be final for purposes of

judicial review except a final decision of the Judicial Officer upon appeal.

(5) The Judicial Officer shall issue a decision within 10 calendar days of the receipt of the response to the appeal.

§ 1.424 Motions and requests.

(a) *General.* All motions and requests shall be filed with the Hearing Clerk, and served upon all the parties except motions and requests made on the record during the oral hearing.

(b) *Motions entertained.* No dispositive motions, including motions to dismiss on the pleadings and motions for summary judgment, shall be entertained unless specifically mentioned herein or allowed in the discretion of the Judge.

(c) *Contents.* All written motions and requests shall state the particular order, ruling, or action desired and the grounds therefore.

(d) *Response to motions and requests.* Within 5 days after service of any written motion or request, or within such shorter or longer period as may be fixed by the Judge, an opposing party may file a response to the motion or request. The other party shall have no right to reply to the response.

§ 1.425 Judges.

(a) *Assignment.* No Judge shall be assigned to serve in any proceeding who:

(1) Has any pecuniary interest in any matter or business involved in the proceeding;

(2) Is related within the third degree by blood or marriage to any party to the proceeding; or

(3) Has any conflict of interest which might impair the Judge's objectivity in the proceeding.

(b) *Disqualification of Judge.* (1) Any party to the proceeding may, by motion made to the Judge, request that the Judge withdraw from the proceeding because of an alleged disqualifying reason. Such motion shall set forth with particularity the grounds of alleged disqualification. The Judge may then either rule upon or certify the motion to the Secretary, but not both.

(2) A Judge shall withdraw from any proceeding for any reason deemed by the Judge to be disqualifying.

(c) *Powers.* Subject to review as provided elsewhere in this part, the Judge,

§ 1.426

7 CFR Subtitle A (1-1-20 Edition)

in any assigned proceeding shall have power to:

- (1) Rule upon motions and requests;
- (2) Set the time and place of a pre-hearing conference and the hearing, adjourn the hearing from time to time, and change the time and place of hearing;
- (3) Administer oaths and affirmations;
- (4) Request the presence of and examine witnesses and receive relevant evidence at the hearing;
- (5) Take or order the taking of depositions as authorized under these rules;
- (6) Admit or exclude evidence;
- (7) Hear oral argument on facts or law,
- (8) Do all acts and take all measures necessary for the maintenance of order, including the exclusion of contumacious counsel or other persons;
- (9) Request additional information from any party to aid in the Judge's determination; and
- (10) Take all other actions authorized under these procedures.

(d) *Who may act in the absence of the Judge.* In case of the absence of the Judge or the Judge's inability to act, the powers and duties to be performed by the Judge under these rules of practice in connection with any assigned proceeding may, without abatement of the proceeding unless otherwise directed by the Chief Judge, be assigned to any other Judge.

§ 1.426 Appeal to Judicial Officer.

(a) *Filing of petition.* Within 10 calendar days after receiving service of the Judge's decision, a party who disagrees with the decision, or any part thereof, or any ruling by the Judge or any alleged deprivation of rights, may appeal such decision to the Judicial Officer by filing an appeal petition with the Hearing Clerk. As provided in § 1.422(e)(2), objections regarding evidence or a limitation regarding examination or cross-examination or other rulings made before the Judge may be relied upon in an appeal. Each issue set forth in the petition, and the arguments thereon, shall be separately numbered; shall be plainly and concisely stated; and shall contain detailed citations of the record, statutes, regulations or authorities being relied

upon in support thereof. A brief may be filed in support of the appeal simultaneously with the petition. A party filing a petition of appeal to the Judicial Officer, and any brief in support thereof, shall serve the other parties to the proceeding with a copy of the petition and supporting brief. The copies of the petition and supporting brief shall be served on the parties to the proceeding with a copy of the petition and supporting brief. The copies of the petition and supporting brief shall be served on the parties to the proceeding on the same day as the petition and supporting brief are filed with the Judicial Officer.

(b) *Response to appeal petition.* Within 10 calendar days after the service of a copy of an appeal petition and any brief in support thereof, filed by a party to the proceeding, any other party may file with the Hearing Clerk a response in support of or in opposition to the appeal and in such response any relevant issue, not presented in the appeal petition, may be raised. A party filing a response to a petition of appeal to the Judicial Officer shall serve the other parties to the proceeding with a copy of the response. The copies of the response shall be served on the parties to the proceeding on the same day as the response is filed with the Judicial Officer.

(c) *Transmittal of record.* Whenever an appeal of a Judge's decision is filed and a response thereto has been filed or time for filing a response has expired, the Hearing Clerk shall transmit to the Judicial Officer the record of the proceeding. Such record shall include: The pleadings; motions and requests filed and rulings thereon; the transcript of the testimony taken at the hearing, together with the exhibits filed in connection therewith; any documents or papers filed in connection with a pre-hearing conference; such proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and orders, and briefs in support thereof, as may have been filed in connection with the proceeding; the Judge's decision; such exceptions, statements of objections and briefs in support thereof as may have been filed in the proceeding; and the appeal petition, and such briefs in support thereof and responses thereto

as may have been filed in the proceeding.

(d) *Decision of the Judicial Officer on appeal.* The Judicial Officer, upon the basis of and after due consideration of the record and any matter of which official notice is taken, shall rule on the appeal within 4 months after the institution of the proceeding, pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 620b(c)(3). If the Judicial Officer decides that no change or modification of the Judge's decision is warranted, the Judicial Officer may adopt the Judge's decision as the final order in the proceeding, preserving any right of the party bringing the appeal to seek judicial review of such decision in the proper forum. A final order issued by the Judicial Officer shall be filed with the Hearing Clerk. Such order may be regarded by a party as final for purposes of judicial review.

§ 1.427 Filing; identification of parties of record; service; and computation of time.

(a) *Filing; number of copies.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, all documents or papers required or authorized by the rules in this part to be filed with the Hearing Clerk shall be filed in duplicate. Any document or paper required or authorized under the rules in this part to be filed with the Hearing Clerk shall, during the course of an oral hearing, be filed with the Judge.

(b) Parties of record shall receive a list from the Hearing Clerk of the names and addresses of all parties of record immediately after the close of the comment period.

(c) *Service; proof of service.* (1) Each party of record is responsible for serving on every other party and to the Judge all papers and documents submitted after the comment period. Service shall be made either:

(i) By delivering a copy of the document or paper to the individual to be served or to a member of the partnership to be served, or to the president, secretary, or other executive officer or a director of the corporation or association to be served, or to the attorney of record representing such individual, partnership, corporation, organization, or association; or

(ii) By leaving a copy of the document or paper at the principal office or place of business or residence of such individual, partnership, corporation, organization, or association, or of the attorney or agent of record and mailing by regular mail another copy to such person at such address; or

(iii) By registering or certifying and mailing a copy of the document or paper, addressed to such individual, partnership, corporation, organization, or association, or to the attorney or agent of record, at the last known residence or principal office or place of business of such person: *Provided*, That if the registered or certified document or paper is returned undelivered because the addressee refused or failed to accept delivery, the document or paper shall be served by re-mailing it by regular mail; or

(iv) By mailing the document or paper by regular mail.

(2) Proof of service hereunder shall be made by the certificate of the person who actually made the service: *Provided*, that if the service is made by mail, as outlined in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, proof of service shall be made by the return post-office receipt, in the case of registered or certified mail, and if that service is made by regular mail, as outlined in paragraphs (b)(3) and (b)(4) of this section, proof of service shall be made by the certificate of the person who mailed the matter by regular mail. The certificate and post-office receipt contemplated herein shall be filed with the Hearing Clerk, and made a part of the record of the proceeding. The Judge and the Hearing Clerk shall follow the procedures outlined in (c) for service of papers or documents signed by the Judge and/or the Hearing Clerk.

(d) *Effective date of filing.* Any document or paper required or authorized under the rules in this part to be filed shall be deemed to be filed at the time when it reaches the Hearing Clerk; or, if authorized to be filed with another officer or employee of the Department it shall be deemed to be filed at the time when it reaches such officer or employee.

(e) *Computations of time.* Saturdays, Sundays and Federal holidays shall be

§ 1.428

included in computing the time allowed for the filing of any document or paper except as provided in these rules; *Provided*, that, when such time expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, such period shall be extended to include the next following business day.

§ 1.428 Depositions.

(a) *Motion for taking deposition.* Upon the motion of a party to the proceeding, the Judge may, at any time after the filing of the submission, order the taking of testimony by deposition. The Motion shall be in writing, shall be filed with the Hearing Clerk, and shall set forth:

(1) The name and address of the proposed deponent;

(2) The name and address of the person (referred to hereafter in this section as the "officer") qualified under the regulations in this part to take depositions, before whom the proposed examination is to be made;

(3) The proposed time and place of the examination; and

(4) The reasons why such deposition should be taken, which shall be solely for the purpose of eliciting testimony which otherwise might not be available at the time of the hearing, for uses as provided in paragraph (g) of this section.

(b) *Judge's order for taking deposition.*

(1) If the Judge finds that testimony may not be otherwise available at the hearing, the taking of the deposition may be ordered. The order shall be served upon the parties, and shall state:

(i) The time and place of the examination;

(ii) The name of the officer before whom the examination is to be made; and

(iii) The name of the deponent.

(2) The officer and the time and place need not be the same as those suggested in the motion.

(c) *Qualifications of officer.* The deposition shall be made before the Judge or before an officer authorized by the law of the United States or by the law of the place of the examination to administer oaths, or before an officer authorized by the Secretary to administer oaths.

7 CFR Subtitle A (1-1-20 Edition)

(d) *Procedure on examinations.* (1) The deponent shall be subject to cross-examination. Objections to questions or documents shall be in short form, stating the grounds of objections relied upon. The questions propounded, together with all objections made (but not including argument or debate), shall be recorded verbatim. In lieu of oral examination, parties may transmit written questions to the officer prior to the examination and the officer shall propound such questions to the deponent.

(2) The applicant shall arrange for the examination of the witness either by oral examination, or by written questions upon agreement of the parties or as directed by the Judge. If the examination is conducted by means of written questions, copies of the questions shall be served upon the other party to the proceeding and filed with the officer and the other party may serve cross questions and file them with the officer at any time prior to the time of the examination.

(e) *Certification by officer.* The officer shall certify on the deposition that the deponent was duly sworn and that the deposition is a true record of the deponent's testimony. The officer shall then securely seal the deposition, together with one copy thereof (unless there are more than two parties in the proceeding, in which case there should be another copy for each additional party), in an envelope and mail the same by registered or certified mail to the Hearing Clerk.

(f) *Corrections to the transcript.* (1) At any time prior to the hearing any party may file a motion proposing corrections to the transcript of the deposition.

(2) Unless a party files such a motion in the manner prescribed, the transcript shall be presumed, except for obvious typographical errors, to be a true, correct, and complete transcript of the testimony given in the deposition proceeding and to contain an accurate description or reference to all exhibits in connection therewith, and shall be deemed to be certified correct without further procedure.

(3) At any time prior to use of the deposition in accordance with paragraph (g) of this section and after consideration of any objections filed thereto, the Judge may issue an order making any corrections in the transcript which the Judge finds are warranted, which corrections shall be entered onto the original transcript by the Hearing Clerk (without obscuring the original text).

(g) *Use of deposition.* A deposition ordered and taken in accordance with the provisions of this section may be used in a proceeding under these rules if the Judge finds that the evidence is otherwise admissible and that the witness is dead; that the witness is unable to attend or testify because of age, sickness, infirmity, or imprisonment; or that such exceptional circumstances exist as to make it desirable, in the interests of justice, to allow the deposition to be used. If the party upon whose motion the deposition was taken refuses to offer it in evidence, any other party may offer the deposition or any thereof in evidence. If only part of a deposition is offered in evidence by a party, an adverse party may require the introduction of any other part which ought in fairness to be considered with the part introduced and any party may introduce any other parts.

§ 1.429 *Ex parte* communications.

(a) At no stage of the proceeding between its institution and issuance of the final decision shall an employee of the Department who is or may reasonably be expected to be involved in the decisional process of the proceeding discuss *ex parte* the merits of the proceeding with any person having an interest in the proceeding, or with any representative of such person: *Provided*, That, procedural matters and status reports shall not be included within this limitation; and *Provided further*, That an employee of the Department who is or may be involved in the decisional process of the proceeding may discuss the merits of the proceeding if all parties of record have been given notice and an opportunity to participate. A memorandum of any such discussion shall be included in the record.

(b) No interested person shall make or knowingly cause to be made to the Judge an *ex parte* communication relevant to the merits of the proceeding.

(c) If the Judge reviews an *ex parte* communication in violation of this section, the one who receives the communication shall place in the public record of the proceeding:

- (1) All such written communication;
- (2) Memoranda stating the substance of all such oral communications; and
- (3) All written responses, and memoranda stating the substance of all oral responses thereto.

(d) Upon receipt of a communication knowingly made or knowingly caused to be made by a party in violation of this section, the Judge may, to the extent consistent with the interests of justice and the policy of the underlying statute, require the party to show cause why his claim or interest in the proceeding should not be dismissed, denied, disregarded, or otherwise adversely affected on account of such violation.

(e) To the extent consistent with the interests of justice and the policy of the underlying statute, a violation of this section shall be sufficient grounds for a decision adverse to the party who knowingly commits a violation of this section or who knowingly causes such a violation to occur.

(f) For purposes of this section *ex parte communication* means an oral or written communication not on the public record with respect to which reasonable prior notice to all parties is not given, but it shall not include requests for status reports on any matter or the proceeding.

Subpart N—Policy With Regard to Indemnification of Department of Agriculture Employees

AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301.

SOURCE: 69 FR 28042, May 18, 2004, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1.501 Policy on employee indemnification.

(a) Indemnification, under the context of this section, shall be the policy