

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approval under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act,
- State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources tideland permit and lease or easement, and
- State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation authorization under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

#### Public Comment

Federal, State, and local agencies, potential contractors, and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in, or affected by, the decision are invited to participate in the scoping process. This process will include:

1. Identification of potential issues;
2. Identification of issues to be analyzed in depth;
3. Determination of potential cooperating agencies and assignment of responsibility; and
4. Examination of various alternatives.

The Forest Supervisor will hold public meetings during the planning process. Interested people are invited to comment. The comment period on the Draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the Notice of Availability appears in the Federal Register.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of the draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so 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, 533 [1978]). Also, environmental objections that could have been raised at the Draft EIS stage may be waived if not raised until after the completion of the final environmental impact statement or dismissed by the courts (*City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 [9<sup>th</sup> 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 substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at the time when we 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 helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft environmental impact 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 Environment Policy Act in 40 CFR 1503.3 while addressing these points.

The responsible official for the decision is Abigail R. Kimbell, Forest Supervisor, Stikine Area, Tongass National Forest, Alaska Region, Petersburg, Alaska.

Dated: January 13, 1997.

Abigail R. Kimbell,

*Forest Supervisor.*

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#### Rural Housing Service

##### Refinancing Community Facilities Loans

**AGENCY:** Rural Housing Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** This Notice describes the Rural Housing Service (RHS) Community Facilities (CF) loan program refinancing policies, informs commercial lenders of the availability of a list of eligible CF borrowers who have the potential to refinance outstanding debt, and invites cooperative and private credit sources to participate in refinancing loans. This action ensures that CF loan program borrowers are aware of lenders that are willing to provide reasonable rates and terms for refinancing. The intended effect of this action is to increase the number of cooperative or private credit sources which are actively involved with RHS's refinancing efforts.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Chadwick O. Parker, Loan Specialist, Rural Housing Service, USDA, Room 6314, South Agriculture Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, D.C. 20250, Telephone: (202) 720-1502.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Program Affected

This action affects the RHS program listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic

Assistance as 10.766 Community Facilities Loans.

#### Discussion of Notice

The RHS CF loan program provides credit to public entities such as municipalities, counties, special-purpose districts, Indian tribes, and nonprofit corporations. Eligible CF loan purposes are to construct, enlarge, extend, or otherwise improve community facilities providing essential services. The loan program is administered in a manner which ensures that it does not compete with credit available from private sources. Loan agreements require financially capable borrowers to refinance debts owed to the RHS when other credit is available at reasonable rates and terms from a cooperative or private credit source.

The RHS would like to further develop its public/private partnerships while enhancing its refinancing efforts. As part of these efforts, each Rural Development State Office, which administers the CF loan program in the field, will maintain a current listing of borrowers who have the potential to refinance. The RHS will also maintain a national list on its World Wide Web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/agency/rhs/cf/cf.htm>.

The RHS will develop a unified database of lenders interested in this refinancing initiative as part of their ongoing effort to establish a stronger alliance with private sector lenders. The RHS requests that interested lenders contact the State Office in each State where they have active lending operations.

Dated: January 21, 1997.

Jan Shadburn,

*Acting Administrator, Rural Housing Service.*

[FR Doc. 97-2197 Filed 1-28-97; 8:45 am]

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#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

##### Bureau of the Census

[Docket No. 961213356-6356-01]

RIN 0607-XX25

##### Census Tract Program for Census 2000—Proposed Criteria

**AGENCY:** Bureau of the Census, Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of proposed program revisions and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** Census tracts are relatively permanent small-area geographic divisions of a county or statistically

equivalent entity<sup>1</sup> defined for the tabulation of decennial census data and selected other statistical programs. The primary goal of the census tract program is to provide a geographic unit that has stable boundaries between decennial censuses. Other goals include the identification of geographic areas that represent meaningful geographic divisions of a county based on economic or social interaction, significant topographic differences within a county, or a certain degree of demographic homogeneity at the time of original delineation. The Census Bureau uses census tracts to tabulate and disseminate a wide variety of data. For Census 2000, census tracts will be established across the entire area of the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands of the United States).

Census tracts first appeared in the 1910 census when local officials in eight of the larger cities delineated these areas. In the 1910, 1920, and 1930 censuses, the Census Bureau published census tract data as special tabulations; in 1940, the Census Bureau began including census tract data in its standard publications. The number of data subjects and the amount of data, as well as the number of counties containing census tracts, increased in every census through 1990. For the 1990 census, the Census Bureau inaugurated complete nationwide coverage and statistics for census tracts or statistically equivalent entities known as block numbering areas (BNAs.) For Census 2000, the Census Bureau will combine the similar programs into a single census tract program.

To determine the boundaries and identification numbers of census tracts, the Census Bureau offers a program to local participants, such as locally identified agencies and American Indian tribal officials, whereby they can review and update the boundaries of the census tracts and BNAs delineated for the 1990 census and suggest revisions according to the criteria developed and promulgated by the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau will then review the resulting Census 2000 census tract plans for conformance to these criteria.

As the first step in this process, the Census Bureau requests comments on

its proposed criteria for the delineation of census tracts in conjunction with Census 2000. These criteria will apply to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Indian and Alaska Native areas, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas. The Census Bureau may modify and, if necessary, reject proposals for census tracts that do not meet the criteria established following this notice.

Besides the proposed criteria, this notice includes a description of the changes from the criteria used for the 1990 census and a list of definitions of key terms used in the criteria.

**DATE:** Any suggestions or recommendations concerning the proposed criteria should be submitted in writing by February 28, 1997.

**ADDRESS:** Director, Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC 20233-0001.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Joel Morrison, Chief, Geography Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC 20233-7400, telephone (301) 457-1132, or e-mail to "joel.morrison@census.gov."

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The census tract delineation criteria have evolved over the past nine decades in response to decennial census practices and the preferences of local participants and data users. After each decennial census, the Census Bureau, in consultation with past participants and data users, reviews and revises these criteria. Then, before the next decennial census, the Census Bureau offers state, tribal, and local officials an opportunity to correct, update, and otherwise improve the universe of census tracts.

In July and August 1995, the Census Bureau issued invitations to local groups and agencies to participate in the delineation of statistical geographic areas for Census 2000. These groups and agencies included regional planning agencies, councils of governments, county planning agencies, officials of Federally recognized American Indian tribes, and officials of the 12 nonprofit Alaska Native Regional Corporations.

In 1997, the Census Bureau will provide materials and detailed guidelines to program participants for the review and delineation of census tracts for Census 2000.

#### A. Criteria for Delineating Census Tracts for Census 2000

The Census Bureau proposes the following criteria for use in delineating Census 2000 census tracts.

##### 1. General Characteristics

- A census tract must meet the population and boundary feature criteria and comprise a reasonably

compact, continuous land area internally accessible to all points by road; the only exceptions are:

(a) where the tract is defined to include a specific legal or land-use area that itself is discontinuous, in which case discontinuity is allowed.

(b) where a discontinuous area or inaccessible area would not meet population size requirements for a separate census tract, in which case the discontinuous or inaccessible area must be combined within an adjacent or proximate census tract.

(c) where the topography or geographic patterns of settlement are not compact, but are irregularly shaped, in which case a census tract shape can depart from the compactness requirement.

- A county boundary always must be a census tract boundary. This criterion takes precedence over all other criteria or requirements except for the population threshold criteria for census tracts on American Indian reservations (AIRs) in multiple counties.

- Census tracts must cover the entire land and inland water area of each county. In coastal waters, territorial seas, and the Great Lakes, the Census Bureau recommends creating in each county a single census tract covering such water bodies to provide for complete census tract coverage.

##### 2. Identification

- A census tract has a basic census tract number composed of no more than four digits and may have a two-digit decimal suffix.

- Census tract numbers must be unique within each county.

- The range of acceptable basic census tract numbers for Census 2000 is 1 to 9989; census tracts delineated specifically to complete coverage in territorial seas and the Great Lakes will use the number 0000 in each county.

- Census tracts delineated within or to encompass an AIR that crosses county or state and county boundaries, where the intent is for the census tract to ignore the county or state boundary for tabulation in an American Indian geographic hierarchy, will use numbers 9400 to 9499.

- The range of acceptable census tract suffixes is .01 to .98. The Census Bureau reserves the .99 suffix to identify civilian and military ships as "crews-of-vessels" census tracts.

##### 3. Boundary Features

The Census Bureau recommends that most census tract boundaries follow visible and identifiable features. This makes the location of census tract boundaries less ambiguous. The Census

<sup>1</sup> Includes parishes in Louisiana; boroughs and census areas in Alaska; independent cities in Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, and Virginia; that portion of Yellowstone National Park in Montana; districts in American Samoa and the Virgin Islands of the United States; municipalities in the Northern Mariana Islands; municipios in Puerto Rico; and the entire area constituting the District of Columbia; and Guam. This notice will refer to all these entities collectively as "counties."

Bureau also permits the use of legal boundaries in some states and situations to allow for census tract-to-governmental unit relationships where the governmental boundaries tend to remain unchanged between censuses. The following features are acceptable as census tract boundaries for Census 2000:

- All state and county boundaries (always required).
- Visible, perennial natural and cultural features, such as roads, rivers, canals, railroads, above-ground high-tension power lines, and so forth.
- All minor civil division (MCD) boundaries (generally towns or townships) in Connecticut, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
- Those MCD boundaries not coincident with the boundaries of incorporated places that themselves are MCDs (being either coextensive with an MCD or independent of MCDs) in Illinois (townships only, not election precincts), Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri (governmental townships only), Nebraska (townships only, not election precincts), North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.
- Barrio, barrio-pueblo, and subbarrio boundaries in Puerto Rico, census subdistrict boundaries in the Virgin Islands of the United States, MCD-

county and island boundaries in American Samoa, and municipal district boundaries in the Northern Mariana Islands.

- All incorporated place boundaries in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
- Conjoint incorporated place boundaries in other states; that is, the boundary separating two different incorporated places.
- AIR boundaries.
- American Indian trust land, Alaska Native village statistical area, and Alaska Native Regional Corporation boundaries, at the discretion of the Census Bureau, insofar as such boundaries are unambiguous for allocating living quarters as part of Census 2000 activities.

When the features listed above are not available for selection, the Census Bureau may, at its discretion, approve other nonstandard visible features, such as ridge lines, pipelines, intermittent streams, fence lines, and so forth. The Census Bureau also may accept, on a case-by-case basis, the boundaries of selected nonstandard and potentially nonvisible features such as the boundaries of National Parks and National Forests, cemeteries, or other special land-use properties, the straight-line extensions of visible features, and other lines of sight.

**4. Population Thresholds**

The Census Bureau proposes the following population criteria for census tracts (see Table 1):

- In the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands of the United States: 1,500 to 8,000 inhabitants, with an optimum of 4,000 inhabitants.
- In American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands: 1,500 to 8,000 inhabitants, with an optimum of 2,500 inhabitants.
- On American Indian reservations: 1,000 to 8,000 inhabitants, with an optimum of 2,500 inhabitants. (The population criteria for AIRs apply to the entire reservation, including AIRs in multiple counties or states).
- In all counties, for census tracts delineated to enclose an institution, a military installation, or other "special place" population: at least 1,000 inhabitants, with no optimum average or maximum (no change from 1990). (A special place includes facilities with resident population, such as correctional institutions, military installations, college campuses, workers' dormitories, hospitals, nursing homes, and group homes. A special place includes the entire facility including nonresidential areas and staff housing units, as well as all group quarters population.)

TABLE 1.—POPULATION THRESHOLDS FOR CENSUS 2000 CENSUS TRACTS

Area description	Population thresholds		
	Optimum	Minimum	Maximum
United States, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands of the U. S. ....	4,000	1,500	8,000
American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands .....	2,500	1,500	8,000
American Indian reservation .....	2,500	1,000	8,000
Special place census tract .....	none	1,000	none

**5. Comparability and Implementation**

As in previous censuses, the Census Bureau generally will not accept newly proposed census tracts that do not meet the required minimum population. However, with appropriate justification, the Census Bureau may grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis. For example, to facilitate census tract comparability over time, any 1990 census tract or BNA (except a "sliver" census tract/BNA—see 6. Sliver Census Tracts) that is virtually unchanged (that is, having less than five percent of the 1990 population affected by a boundary revision) may be recognized as a Census 2000 census tract even if its population falls below the minimum required population or above the maximum allowable

population. The Census Bureau, however, recommends combining low population census tracts and splitting large population census tracts to meet the goal of providing meaningful small-area data.

**6. Sliver Census Tracts**

The Census Bureau will not retain, or continue to recognize for Census 2000, any 1990 "sliver" census tracts or BNAs. After the Census Bureau inserted the 1990 census tracts into the TIGER data base, sliver census tracts resulted from:

- County boundary changes or corrections.
- Special land-use boundary changes or corrections (military reservations, National Parks, and so forth).

• Local requests to correct errors in the insertion of 1990 areas into the TIGER data base.

Sliver census tracts usually cover a very small area, and in most cases involve little or no population or housing. The Census Bureau has adopted new rules for establishing tabulation geographic areas in Census 2000 by separating the collection areas from the tabulation areas. This change will eliminate the need for such sliver census tracts in Census 2000.

In 1990, the Census Bureau established rules to assign special numerical suffixes to identify sliver census tracts, generally beginning with .98 and continuing in descending order. The Census Bureau applied the suffix to both the original census tract that lost

territory and the newly created sliver census tract. For Census 2000, we recommend that local participants dispense with the sliver suffix for legitimate census tracts, but will not require a change if specifically requested by the local participant for comparability purposes.

#### B. Changes to the Criteria for Census 2000

Most provisions of the census tract criteria remain unchanged from those used in conjunction with the 1990 census, with the few exceptions summarized below:

1. The Census Bureau is combining the census tract and BNA programs to create a single census tract program. The major differences between the 1990 census tracts and BNAs were: (1) representatives of the states or Census Bureau staff were responsible for the delineation of BNAs rather than local census statistical areas committees, and (2) census tracts were delineated mainly according to population criteria, while BNAs were delineated to meet data collection criteria based on the number of housing units rather than population. For Census 2000, the Census Bureau will contact local officials for the delineation of census tracts, and there will not be a housing unit criterion, thus bringing both areas under a single standard.

2. The Census Bureau is increasing the number of governmental units that have boundaries acceptable to use as census tract boundaries. The added areas are: all MCDs in Indiana and selected MCDs in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin; the MCD-county and island areas of American Samoa; and villages in New York.

3. The Census Bureau now allows officials of Federally recognized AIRs meeting the 1,000 minimum population threshold to delineate census tracts without regard to state or county boundaries. Although the Census Bureau will tabulate data for each state-county-census tract part, it also plans to provide summed data for all components of each census tract bearing the same numeric identifier within a Federally recognized AIR.

4. The Census Bureau will use census tracts only as tabulation areas, thus allowing late corrections to census tract boundaries as a result of legal county boundary changes or to correct errors without having to create unique sliver census tracts for such areas.

#### Definitions of Key Terms

*Alaska Native Regional Corporation (ANRC)*—A corporate entity established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1972, Public Law 92-203, as amended by Public Law 92-204, to conduct both the business and nonprofit affairs of Alaska Natives.

Twelve ANRCs cover the entire State of Alaska except for the Annette Islands Reserve.

*Alaska Native Village statistical area (ANVSA)*—A statistical entity containing the densely settled extent of an Alaska Native village that constitutes an association, band, clan, community, group, tribe, or village recognized pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1972, Public Law 92-203, as amended by Public Law 92-204.

*American Indian reservation (AIR)*—A Federally recognized American Indian entity with boundaries established by treaty, statute, and/or executive or court order and over which American Indians have governmental jurisdiction. Along with reservation, designations such as colonies, communities, pueblos, rancherias, and reserves apply to AIRs.

*Block numbering area (BNA)*—A small-area, statistical geographic division of a county or statistically equivalent area delineated in 1990 instead of and generally geographically equivalent to census tracts. For Census 2000, the Census Bureau is merging the BNA program into the census tract program.

*Coastal water*—Water bodies between territorial seas and inland water, the encompassing headlands being more than one mile apart and less than 24 miles apart.

*Conjoint*—A description of a boundary shared by two adjacent geographic entities.

*Continuous*—A description of areas sharing common boundaries, such that the areas, when combined, form a single piece of territory. Discontinuous areas form disjoint pieces.

*Crews-of-vessels census tract*—A census tract created at the time of enumeration for allocating the shipboard population of merchant and military ships and identified with a special numeric suffix equal to .99.

*Great Lakes' waters*—Water area beyond one mile wide headland embayments located in any of the five Great Lakes: Erie, Huron, Michigan, Ontario, or Superior.

*Incorporated place*—A type of governmental unit, sanctioned by state law as a city, town (except in New England, New York, and Wisconsin), village, or borough (except in Alaska

and New York), having legally prescribed limits, powers, and functions.

*Inland water*—Water bodies entirely surrounded by land or at the point where their opening to coastal waters, territorial seas, or the Great Lakes is less than one mile across.

*Minor civil division (MCD)*—The primary governmental or administrative division of a county in 28 states, Puerto Rico and the Island Areas having legal boundaries, names, and descriptions. MCDs represent many different types of legal entities with a wide variety of characteristics, powers, and functions depending on the state and type of MCD. In some states, some or all of the incorporated places also constitute MCDs.

*Nonvisible feature*—A map feature that is not visible on the ground such as a city or county boundary through space, a property line, a short line-of-sight extension of a road, or a point-to-point line of sight.

*Special place*—A specific location requiring special enumeration because the location includes people not in households or the area includes special land use. Special places include facilities with resident populations, such as correctional institutions, military installations, college campuses, workers' dormitories, hospitals, nursing homes, group homes, and land-use areas such as National Parks. A special place includes the entire facility, including nonresidential areas and staff housing units, as well as all group quarters population.

*Territorial seas*—Water bodies not included under the rules for inland water, coastal water, or Great Lakes' waters, see above.

*Visible feature*—A map feature that one can see on the ground such as a road, railroad track, above-ground transmission line, stream, shoreline, fence, sharply defined mountain ridge, or cliff. A nonstandard visible feature is a feature that may not be clearly defined on the ground (such as a ridge), may be seasonal (such as an intermittent stream), or may be relatively impermanent (such as a fence). The Census Bureau generally requests verification that nonstandard features pose no problem in their location during field work.

Dated: December 18, 1996.  
Martha Farnsworth Riche,  
Director, Bureau of the Census.  
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