

form allows borrowers to keep RUS up-to-date of any changes in signature authority and controls the release of funds only to authorized borrower representatives.

*Estimate of Burden:* Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.1 of an hour per response.

*Respondents:* Small businesses and organizations.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 450.

*Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent:* 1.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents:* 45.

Copies of this information collection, and related form and instructions, can be obtained from Bob Turner, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, at (202) 720-0696.

Comments are invited on (a) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumption 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 respondents, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Stop 1522, Room 4034 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522.

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: December 14, 1999.

**Christopher A. McLean,**

*Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.*  
[FR Doc. 99-33056 Filed 12-20-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-15-P

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Rural Utilities Service

#### Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

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

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44

U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended), the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by February 22, 2000.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Program Development & Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 4034 South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 720-0736. FAX: (202) 720-4120.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Title:* Request for Release of Lien and/or Approval of Sale.

*OMB Control Number:* 0572-0041.

*Type of Request:* Reinstatement without change of previously approved information collection.

*Abstract:* The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) makes mortgage loans and loan guarantees to electric and telecommunications systems to provide and improve electric and telecommunications service in rural areas pursuant to the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended (7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*) (RE Act). All current and future capital assets of RUS borrowers are ordinarily mortgaged or pledged to the Federal Government as security for RUS loans. Assets include tangible and intangible utility plant, non-utility property, construction in progress, and materials, supplies, and equipment normally used in a telecommunications system. The RE Act and the various security instruments, e.g., the RUS mortgage, limit the rights of a RUS borrower to dispose of its capital assets.

The RUS Form 793, Request for Release of Lien and/or Approval of Sale, allows the telecommunications program borrower to seek agency permission to sell some of its assets. The form collects detailed information regarding the proposed sale of a portion of the borrower's system. RUS telecommunications borrowers fill out the form to request RUS approval in order to sell capital assets.

*Estimate of Burden:* Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2.84 hours per response.

*Respondents:* Small businesses or organizations.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 75.

*Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent:* 1.

*Estimate Total Annual Burden on Respondents:* 213.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Bob Turner, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, at (202) 720-0696.

Comments are invited on (a) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumption 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 on other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Stop 1522, Room 4034 South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250-1522.

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: December 14, 1999.

**Christopher McLean,**

*Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.*  
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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Rural Utilities Service

#### Alabama Electric Cooperative; Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment

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

**ACTION:** Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is issuing an environmental assessment with respect to the potential environmental impacts related to the construction and operation of a 496 megawatt combined cycle electric generation plant and associated facilities. RUS may provide financing assistance to Alabama Electric Cooperative for the project.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Bob Quigel, Rural Utilities Service, Engineering and Environmental Staff, Stop 1571, 1400 Independence Avenue,