

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

March 1, 2005.

The Department of Agriculture has submitted the following information collection requirement(s) to OMB for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13. Comments regarding (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 assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; (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 should be addressed to: Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office, of Management and Budget (OMB), OIRA_Submission@OMB.EOP.GOV or fax (202) 395-5806 and to Department Clearance Office, USDA, OCIO, Mail Stop 7602, Washington, DC 20250-7602. Comments regarding these information collections are best assured of having their full effect if received within 30 days of this notification. Copies of the submission(s) may be obtained by calling (202) 720-8681.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number and the agency informs potential persons who are to respond to the collection of information that such persons are not required to respond to

the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Rural Utilities Service

Title: RUS Electric Loan Application and Related Reporting Burdens.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0032.

Summary of Collection: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) was established in 1994 by the Federal Crop Insurance Reform and Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103-354, 108 stat. 3178, 7 U.S.C. 6941 *et seq.*) as successor to the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) with respect to certain programs, including the electric loan and loan guarantee program authorized under the Rural Electrification Act (RE Act) of 1936. The RE Act authorize and empowers the Administrator of RUS to make and guarantee loans to furnish and improve electric service in rural areas. These loans are amortized over a period of up to 35 years and secured by the borrower's electric assets. RUS will collect information including studies and reports to support borrower loan applications.

Need and Use of the Information: RUS will collect information to determine the eligibility of applicants for loans and loan guarantees under the RE Act; monitor the compliance of borrowers with debt covenants and regulatory requirements in order to protect loan security; ensure that borrowers use loan funds for purposes consistent with the statutory goals of the RE Act; and obtain information on the progress of rural electrification and evaluate the success of RUS program activities.

Description of Respondents: Not-for-profit institutions; Business or other for-profit; State, Local or Tribal Government.

Number of Respondents: 801.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting: On occasion; Annually.

Total Burden Hours: 65,717.

Ruth Brown,

Departmental Information Collection Clearance Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Nutrition Service

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request; Food Stamp Program Redemption Certificate, Form, FNS-278B; Food Stamp Program Wholesaler Redemption Certificate, Form FNS-278-4

AGENCY: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Food and Nutrition Service is publishing for public comment a summary of a proposed information collection. The proposed collection is a revision of a currently approved collection of the Food Stamp Program for which approval expires on February 28, 2005. The Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, requires that the Food and Nutrition Service will provide all authorized retail food stores and wholesale food concerns with redemption certificates. The redemption certificates are to be used by all authorized retailers and wholesale firms to present food coupons to insured financial institutions for credit or for cash. Requirements in the Food Stamp Program regulations are the basis for the information collected on Form FNS-278B, Food Stamp Redemption Certificate and Form FNS-278-4, Wholesaler Redemption Certificate.

The Food and Nutrition Service is rapidly phasing out the use of paper food coupons. Currently, 99.9 percent of all food stamp benefits are issued electronically. Forty-eight States, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico have online operating Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) systems. Two States operate offline food stamp EBT systems and issue paper food coupons to recipients who move out of State and have remaining food stamp benefits. Many States have already closed out their coupon inventory completely and more will be doing the same in the upcoming year. Approximately 438,955 Redemption Certificates were processed by retailers and wholesalers in Fiscal Year 2004, and the number continues to decline due to 100 percent EBT