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Dated: October 16, 2007.

Jeremy Stump,

Senior Advisor for International and Homeland Security Affairs and Biotechnology.

[FR Doc. E7-20914 Filed 10-23-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-03-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency

Emergency Conservation Program; Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Farm Service Agency, USDA.
ACTION: Notice of intent; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Farm Service Agency (FSA) announces its intention to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). The SEIS will assess the potential environmental impacts of alternatives for administration and implementation of the ECP. FSA administers this program and is now conducting a comprehensive review of its current policies, achievements, and potential future program changes. FSA will be analyzing a range of ECP program alternatives. The SEIS also provides a means for the public to have opportunities to voice any opinions they may have about the program, and any ideas for improving it in the future. This Notice of Intent (NOI) informs the public that FSA is requesting public comment and describes in general the description of preliminary ECP Alternatives that will be analyzed in the Draft SEIS.

DATES: To ensure that the full range of issues and alternatives related to the ECP are addressed, FSA invites comments. Comments should be submitted by close of business on December 24, 2007, to ensure full consideration. Comments submitted after this date will be considered to the extent possible.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope of the Draft SEIS and requests for copies of should be directed to ECP SEIS, Geo-Marine Incorporated, 2713 Magruder Blvd., Suite D, Hampton, VA 23666-1572; or by logging on to <http://public.geo-marine.com> to obtain state specific public scoping meetings dates, locations, directions, and comment forms.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Matthew T. Ponish, National

Environmental Compliance Manager, USDA/FSA/CEPD/Stop 0513, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-0513, (202) 720-6853, or e-mail at:

Matthew.Ponish@wdc.usda.gov. More detailed information on ECP may be obtained from FSA's Web site: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=ecp>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The SEIS is being prepared on the ECP to provide FSA decision makers and the public with an analysis that evaluates program effects in appropriate contexts, describes the intensity of adverse as well as beneficial impacts, and addresses cumulative impacts of ECP. Title IV of the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978, as amended (codified at 16 U.S.C. 2201-2205) authorized the ECP, which provides emergency funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by wind erosion, floods, hurricanes, or other natural disasters, and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures during periods of severe drought. Conservation problems existing prior to the disaster involved are not eligible for cost-sharing assistance. ECP is administered by FSA State and county committees. The SEIS will help FSA to review potential environmental impacts resulting from this program and the results will be used in implementing and modifying ECP administration and funding. The Record of Decision resulting from the SEIS will serve as guidance to FSA program decision makers when considering future ECP changes.

Public Participation

The public is urged to participate in helping to define the scope of the proposed Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. In addition to allowing the opportunity to comment via mail and e-mail at the addresses listed previously, FSA plans to hold ten public scoping meetings to provide information and opportunities for discussing the issues and alternatives to be covered in the Draft SEIS and to receive oral and written comments. The meetings will be held in AL, CA, GA, FL, LA, MO, and TX. Each scoping meeting will be conducted in the evening to allow the greatest opportunity for public input. Please check <http://public.geo-marine.com> for meeting locations, times, directions, and comment forms.

Description of Preliminary SEIS Alternatives

FSA has developed a set of preliminary alternatives to be studied in the draft SEIS to initiate the process.

The alternatives will be amended, as appropriate, based on input by the public and agencies during the public scoping process. The SEIS will address the following alternatives, which include recommended changes to the program.

Action (baseline)

Under this alternative, ECP would continue as it is currently administered with no substantive changes.

Alternative A

This alternative would consider changes to land eligibility that would make ECP available for assistance on farmlands other than cropland, pastureland, and hayland.

Alternative B

This alternative would make current ECP available only in those counties where disasters designated by the President or Secretary of Agriculture have occurred.

Alternative C

Alternative C would be a combination of Alternatives A and B. Under this alternative, farmlands, other than cropland, pastureland and hayland, in counties designated as disasters by the President or Secretary of Agriculture would be eligible for participation in ECP.

Signed in Washington, DC, on October 4, 2007.

Teresa C. Lasseter,

Administrator, Farm Service Agency.

[FR Doc. E7-20961 Filed 10-23-07; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Nutrition Service

Emergency Food Assistance Program; Allocation Formula

AGENCY: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice invites State and local agencies involved in the administration of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the general public to comment on the intent of the Department to modify the data sources used to calculate the formula for allocating TEFAP commodities and administrative funds among State agencies. Data sources currently used to allocate these resources have been used for a number of years. However, more accurate, reliable, and up-to-date data sources for gauging poverty and unemployment and, ultimately, each

State's need for TEFAP commodities and administrative funds, are now available. Therefore, unless comments reveal a significant disadvantage to implementing these changes, the Department intends to allocate TEFAP commodities and administrative funds for fiscal year 2008 using these new data sources.

DATES: To be assured of consideration, comments must be received on or before November 23, 2007.

ADDRESSES: The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) invites interested persons to submit comments on this Notice. You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- *Fax:* Submit comments by facsimile transmission to (703) 305-2420.

- *Disk or CD-ROM:* Submit comments on disk to Lillie F. Ragan, Assistant Branch Chief, Policy Branch, Food Distribution Division, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 506, Alexandria, Virginia 22302-1594.

- *Mail:* Send comment to Lillie F. Ragan at the above address.

- *Hand Delivery or Courier:* Deliver comments to the above address.

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

Comments submitted in response to this Notice will be included in the record and will be made available to the public. Please be advised that the substance of the comments and the identity of the individuals or entities submitting the comments will be subject to public disclosure. All written submissions will be available for public inspection at the address above during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lillie Ragan at (703) 305-2662.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of TEFAP is to provide nutrition assistance to those with the greatest and most immediate need. To accomplish this purpose, the Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983 (7 U.S.C. 7501, *et seq.* (the Act)) requires that TEFAP commodities and administrative funds be allocated among States according to a formula that accounts for poverty and unemployment levels within each State. Section 214(a)(1) of the Act (7 U.S.C. 7515(a)(1)) requires that 60 percent of each State's allocation be equal to the percentage of the nation's persons in poverty within that State; and Section 214(a)(2) (7 U.S.C. 7515(a)(2)) requires that the remaining

40 percent be equal to the percentage of the nation's unemployed persons within that State.

The Act also requires that data from the Census Bureau be used to determine the poverty line (7 U.S.C. 7501(7) *citing* 42 U.S.C. 9902(2)); data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) be used to determine the number of unemployed persons; that the number of unemployed persons be calculated as a monthly average; and that the data used to calculate that average originate from the most recent fiscal year for which information is available (7 U.S.C. 7501(2)). Aside from these requirements, the Act places no restrictions on the data sources or methodology used to calculate the formula.

The Department intends to use data sources that are more accurate, reliable, and up-to-date than our current sources to calculate the TEFAP allocation formula. This will provide a more accurate gauge of poverty and unemployment levels within the States, thus targeting program resources to those States most in need.

The poverty portion of the formula is currently updated annually, using data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), an annual survey administered by the Census Bureau to approximately 100,000 households. This data is provided as a 3-year rolling average, and is comprised of data collected during the three calendar years preceding a given fiscal year. Thus, the poverty portion of the formula is actually calculated from data obtained from 300,000 households over a period of three years. The unemployment portion of the formula is updated annually, using data provided to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) by the States. Currently, a 3-month average based on the number of unemployed persons in each State during May, June, and July is used.

These data sources are deficient because they are not the most accurate, timely, and reliable sources available, and therefore limit the Department's ability to fulfill the purpose of the Act.

The poverty portion of the formula is deficient because it is calculated using a 3-year rolling average. This means that 60% of each State's annual TEFAP allocation is based primarily on data that is two or three years old, which provides an untimely and potentially inaccurate reflection of current poverty levels within each State. For example, if State A has historically had a small number of people in poverty, but suffers a disaster—such as a flood or hurricane—that casts a large number of

people into poverty during a given calendar year, continued use of the 3-year rolling poverty average would require the Department to use two- and three-year old data, which would not adequately recognize the current need for nutrition assistance in the State, to calculate the poverty portion of State A's TEFAP allocation.

The 3-month unemployment average is deficient because each month represents one-third of the data used to calculate the unemployment portion of its annual TEFAP allocation. Thus, a 3-month average is highly susceptible to variations caused by reporting errors or anomalous economic conditions which may occur in any given month, but which are not necessarily representative of employment conditions within a State. For example, State B has historically had high levels of unemployment, but reports unusually low unemployment levels for May, perhaps due to a reporting error, a failure of many persons to report their unemployment status for extraneous reasons (such as a natural disaster), or a one-time employment increase (such as hosting a major convention or sporting event). As a result, one-third of the data used to calculate the unemployment portion of State B's TEFAP allocation would be based on data that does not reflect actual employment conditions in that State during most of the year.

To redress these deficiencies, the Department intends, consistent with the Act, to use data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) rather than CPS data to calculate the poverty portion of the formula, and a 10-month average rather than a 3-month average to calculate the unemployment portion.

ACS, which became fully operational in calendar year 2005, produces data that is superior to CPS data in several respects. Among these is the fact that ACS has a much larger sample size. While ACS is administered to approximately 2.5 percent of American households, or (currently) 3,000,000 households, per year, CPS is administered to only 100,000 households per year. ACS poverty statistics are also timelier. Unlike CPS statistics, which are based on data collected during the three calendar years preceding a given fiscal year, ACS statistics are based on data collected during the single calendar year preceding a given fiscal year. Lastly, unlike participation in CPS, participation in ACS is mandatory, which will result in higher response rates. Individuals over the age of 18 who

decline to participate are subject to penalties.

As to the unemployment portion of the formula, a 10-month unemployment average is more accurate than a 3-month average because it dampens the effect that atypical employment conditions and reporting errors in any month can have on a State's average. While a 12-month average would be the most ideal, BLS' reporting schedule is such that only 10 months of data are available at the time that TEFAP allocations would have to be calculated.

Because ACS poverty-data is single year data, the poverty portion of a State's allocation index may be more likely to vary from year-to-year. However, because the intent of TEFAP is to address the most immediate and current need, such variations actually serve the purpose of the program. Moreover, it is worth noting that year-to-year allocations have also varied widely using the current data sources. For example, of the 55 States and territories (i.e., States) operating TEFAP in fiscal year 2006, 5 had increases in their allocations of 10 percent or greater, 22 had increases of 0 to 9.9 percent, 27 had decreases of 0 to 9.9 percent, and 1 had a decrease greater than 10 percent from fiscal year 2005 to 2006. In fiscal year 2007, 5 States had increases of 10 percent or greater, 25 States had increases of 0 to 9.9 percent, 23 States had decreases of 0 to 9.9 percent, and 2 States had decreases greater than 10 percent. In contrast, if the proposed changes had been implemented prior to allocating 2007 resources, the number and size of increases and decreases that would have resulted are very similar to those that actually occurred. Specifically, 8 States would have received increases of 10 percent or greater, 18 States would have received increases of 0 to 9.9 percent, 27 States would have decreases of 0 to 9.9 percent, and 2 States would have had decreases greater than 10 percent. Therefore, unless comments reveal a significant disadvantage to implementing these changes, the Department intends to allocate TEFAP commodities and administrative funds for fiscal year 2008 using these new data sources without further notification.

Dated: October 18, 2007.

Gloria Gutierrez,

Acting Administrator.

[FR Doc. E7-20963 Filed 10-23-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-30-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Information Collection; Social and Cultural Structure of Private Forestry

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; request for comment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Forest Service is seeking comments from all interested individuals and organizations on the new information collection; Social and Cultural Structure of Private Forestry.

DATES: Comments must be received in writing on or before December 24, 2007 to be assured of consideration. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: Comments concerning this notice should be addressed to John Schelhas, Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, 112 Campbell Hall, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL 36088.

Comments also may be submitted via facsimile to (334) 724-4451 or by e-mail to: jschelhas@fs.fed.us.

The public may inspect comments received at 204 Campbell Hall, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL during normal business hours. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to (334) 727-8131 to facilitate entry to the building.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Schelhas, Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, 334-727-8131. Individuals who use TDD may call the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 1-800-877-8339, 24 hours a day, every day of the year, including holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Social and Cultural Structure of Private Forestry

OMB Number: 0596-NEW.

Expiration Date of Approval:

Type of Request: New.

Abstract: Non-industrial private forests constitute the majority of the forest in the South, and provide many important public and private benefits. These benefits are enhanced when landowners receive professional forestry assistance, though very few landowners seek assistance or have written management plans for their forests. This problem is particularly acute for minority forest landowners. This study will use ethnographic methods to learn about social and cultural aspects of forest landowner decision-making; in particular, forest values and identities, social networks for information flows, and actual forest management practices. The information gathered will contribute to scientific papers presented

at professional meetings and in publications. The data will also assist in the development of new materials and techniques for outreach to forest managers by government, nonprofit, and private forester and natural resource managers.

Face-to-face interviews with 200 forest landowners (100 per year) will occur at three sites in the South. A team of researchers from the Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service and the College of Agricultural, Environmental, and Natural Sciences, Tuskegee University will conduct the interviews and analyze the data collected. The information collected includes: (1) Responses to "twenty statements test" to measure identity; (2) social networks utilized to acquire forest management information; (3) life histories with regard to land ownership and forest management; (4) demographic data; and (5) land use and forest management practices.

The information will be collected only once from each landowner. If the information is not collected, federal, state, and private efforts to promote improved forest management to provide benefits for landowners and society will be less successful.

Estimate of Annual Burden: 2 hours.

Type of Respondents: Forest landowners.

Estimated Annual Number of Respondents: 100.

Estimated Annual Number of Responses per Respondent: Once.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 200 hours.

Comment is invited on: (1) Whether this collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes and the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical or scientific utility; (2) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

All comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses when provided, will be a matter of public record. Comments will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval.