

non-waiver states. Similarly, responses of vulnerable respondents will be compared to those of non-vulnerable respondents to see the extent to which the elderly and/or disabled may have greater problems with use of EBT, and whether the introduction of customer service waivers imposes any special hardships on the elderly and disabled.

This information is needed to assist FNS as it makes decisions in the future regarding the granting of customer service waivers. No existing data source can provide all of the information needed to complete the evaluation. Computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) will be used to minimize respondent burden and interviewer error in the New EBT User Survey. Existing FSP databases from the five States will be used to construct the survey sample frame and to obtain demographic data on recipients affected by the waivers. The survey questionnaire will be kept as simple and respondent-friendly as possible. Responses are voluntary and confidential. Survey data will be combined with other data for statistical purposes and reported only in aggregate or statistical form.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this data collection is estimated to average 20 minutes per response, including time for listening to instructions and responding to questionnaire items. There is no need for respondents to gather data to respond to the questionnaire items.

Respondents: Persons in five selected EBT States who apply for food stamp benefits for the first time in November 1999, and who use their EBT card for shopping.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 1,400.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 467 hours.

Copies of the information to be collected can be obtained from William Levedahl, Food Assistance, Poverty and Well-Being Branch, Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1800 M St., NW, Washington, DC 20036-5801, 202-694-5431.

Comments: Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, 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, such as through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to William Levedahl, Food Assistance, Poverty and Well-Being Branch, Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1800 M St., NW, Washington, DC 20036-5801, 202-694-5431. All responses to this notice will be considered and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: April 21, 1999.

Betsey Kuhn,

Director, Food and Rural Economic Division.

[FR Doc. 99-11231 Filed 5-4-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-18-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency

Notice of Eligibility Criteria for Preferred Lenders

AGENCY: Farm Service Agency, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Eligibility Criteria.

SUMMARY: This notice revises the volume requirements necessary for lenders to be eligible for the Farm Service Agency's Preferred Lender Program (PLP).

EFFECTIVE DATE: May 5, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Galen VanVleet, Senior Loan Officer, Farm Service Agency, Farm Loan Programs Loan Making Division, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, STOP 0522, Washington, DC 20250-0522, telephone (202) 720-1638; email GalenVanVleet@wdc.fsa.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Programs Affected

10.406 Farm Operating Loans

10.407 Farm Ownership Loans

Background

The PLP provides qualifying lenders additional authorities and streamlined procedures under the Agency's guaranteed farm loan program. To qualify for PLP status, lenders must meet the eligibility criteria of 7 CFR 762.106(b) and (c). Paragraph (c)(3) of this section requires lenders to have closed a minimum number of Agency guaranteed farm loans. With this notice, the Agency is setting the minimum number of loans a lender must have

closed in the past 5 years to qualify for PLP status at 20. This is a reduction from the current 30 loans in the past 3 years established by the Notice of Eligibility Criteria published in the **Federal Register** on February 12, 1999 (64 FR 7404).

Signed at Washington, DC, on April 28, 1999.

Keith Kelly,

Administrator,

Farm Service Agency.

[FR Doc. 99-11228 Filed 5-4-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-05-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Southwestern Region; Authorization of Livestock Grazing Activities on the Sacramento Grazing Allotment, Sacramento Ranger District, Lincoln National Forest, Otero County, NM

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement on a proposal to authorize livestock grazing activities on the Sacramento Grazing Allotment. The project area encompasses over 111,000 acres of National Forest lands on the Sacramento Ranger District of the Lincoln National Forest. The Sacramento Grazing Allotment comprises approximately 25% of the range district. The project has generated controversy on three main points; effects to threatened and endangered animal and plant species, concern for degraded riparian areas, and forage competition between wildlife and livestock.

DATES: The agency invites written comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis. In addition, the agency will give notice for the full environmental analysis once it nears completion so that interested and affected people may participate and contribute to a final decision.

Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by June 15, 1999.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be available for public comment in July, 1999. After considering the comments received on the proposed action, the analysis document will be modified to include any changes that result. Once updated, the Final Environmental Impact Statement should be available to the public in September 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments concerning the proposal and scope of the analysis should be received in writing by June 15, 1999. Send written comments and suggestions concerning the management of this area to Rick Newmon or Mark Cadwallader, Sacramento Ranger District, P.O. Box 288, Cloudcroft, New Mexico, 88317.

Responsible Official

The District Ranger will decide whether or not to authorize domestic livestock grazing on the Sacramento Allotment which will include adding appropriate forest plan standards and guidelines to Part 3 of the Term Grazing Permit. If grazing is authorized, the District Ranger will decide on the permitted number of animals and season of use, range facilities to be constructed, allowable utilization standards, required monitoring and mitigation measures (best management practices, BMPs). In addition, the District Ranger will establish a forage allocation for livestock and wildlife for the Sacramento Allotment. This allocation will prescribe a percentage of the total available forage that will be reserved for wildlife species.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the proposed project and scope of analysis should be directed to Rick Newmon or Mark Cadwallader at (505-682-2551).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Forest Service is planning to authorize livestock grazing activities on the Sacramento Grazing Allotment.

Background

The current Sacramento Allotment is the result of the combination of 10 historical allotments. In the late 1970's, the High Nogal Ranch Inc. acquired the grazing permits on the allotments mentioned above. The control of livestock management on these small allotments by one business interest offered an opportunity to combine them into one large allotment. Combining the allotments provided an opportunity to improve resource management as well as administrative and economic efficiency. The allotments were combined and the current Sacramento Grazing Allotment was formed. And environmental analysis and an allotment management plan (AMP) were approved in 1979 for the newly consolidated allotment. The AMP prescribed an intensive rotation grazing system be implemented along with a very extensive range improvement development program. Full livestock numbers were run on the allotment, under direction of the new AMP, for

about two years. In 1983, the permittee filed for bankruptcy. The bankruptcy left the implementation of the AMP only partially completed. Between 1983 and 1989, the allotment saw periods of very light use to total non-use by livestock.

In 1989, the current permittees acquired the grazing permit for the Sacramento Allotment. The new permittees acquired only the grazing permit and did not acquire the private lands which were an integral part of the livestock operation when the original combination took place. In addition, the long period of non-use on the allotment resulted in deterioration of many of the existing range improvements. With many of the range improvements no longer functional and changes in private land base available to the current permittees, the existing AMP had become essentially unmanageable.

After acquisition of the grazing permit, the current permittees gradually began to stock the allotment to full permitted numbers. When full numbers were run on the permit in 1991, forage utilization began to exceed acceptable levels. Excessive forage utilization has been a concern since 1991.

Existing Condition

The Sacramento Allotment contains over 36 miles of perennial streams. Riparian inventory data indicates that less than 10% of the riparian zones associated with these perennial waters are in satisfactory condition, based on the Region 3 standards and guidelines for riparian areas. The Sacramento Allotment contains about half of all the riparian resources on the Sacramento Ranger District. The livestock management decisions made on this allotment will be an important factor in determining the potential for riparian improvement on the entire district.

The Sacramento Allotment is home to several threatened and endangered plant and animal species. They include the Sacramento Mountain thistle, Sacramento prickly poppy, Mexican spotted owl, peregrine falcon, and the bald eagle. The current forage utilization levels are not conducive to moving range condition rating towards good to excellent range condition as specified in various species recovery plans.

Forage competition between elk and livestock has developed into a resource concern. The excessive forage use currently occurring on the allotment is the combined result of forage use by the current elk population and currently permitted livestock numbers.

Objectives

Implement a maximum forage use level or minimum stubble height

requirement that will lead to long-term improvement in rangeland ecosystems and riparian habitats.

Bring permitted livestock numbers in line with estimated carrying capacity.

Develop a grazing management strategy which identifies the structural and range improvements required to implement that strategy.

Establish an allocation of available forage between livestock and wildlife.

Permit livestock grazing as a tool to meet vegetative management objectives as set forth in the Lincoln National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan (pp. 34-36 and pp. 86-101).

Continue to permit commercial livestock use on the Sacramento Allotment to a level that contributes to the local custom and culture and the local economy while sustaining healthy ecosystems.

Desired Future Condition

Forest plan standards and guidelines for riparian areas are being met.

Threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitat is improving and recovery objectives are being met.

Areas of unsatisfactory Range condition are on an upward trend toward satisfactory or better range condition.

The allocation of forage between livestock and wildlife species has been implemented. This allocation is continually monitored and actions are taken to maintain a viable elk population that is in balance maintain with the available forage produced on the allotment.

Recreational uses and esthetic values have been enhanced through the improved management of rangeland ecosystems.

Authorization is needed on this allotment because:

—Where consistent with other multiple use goals and objectives there is Congressional intent to allow grazing on suitable lands. (Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, Wilderness Act of 1964, Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, National Forest Management Act of 1976).

—The Sacramento Allotment contain lands identified as suitable for domestic livestock grazing in the Lincoln National Forest Plan and continued domestic livestock grazing is consistent with the goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines of the forest plan.

—It is Forest Service policy to make forage available to qualified livestock operators from lands suitable for grazing

consistent with land management plans (FSM 2203.1).

—It is Forest Service policy to continue contributions to the economic and social well being of people by providing opportunities for economic diversity and by promoting stability for communities that depend on range resources for their livelihood (FSM 2202.1).

—By regulation, forage producing lands will be managed for livestock grazing where consistent with land management plans (36 CFR 222.2(c)).

The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NYDC*, 435 U.S. 519.553 (1973). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th 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 that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it 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 also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft 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 Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Dated: April 23, 1999.

Jose M. Martinez,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 99-11198 Filed 5-4-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

April 29, 1999.

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), Washington, DC 20503 and to Departmental Clearance Office, USDA, OCIO, Mail Stop 7602, Washington, D.C. 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) 720-6746.

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.

Economic Research Service

Title: Emergency Food Assistance System Study.

OMB Control Number: 0536-NEW.

Summary of Collection: Many emergency food providers are reporting

increased demand for their services as a result of changes in the nation's welfare and food assistance safety net under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and decreasing ability to meet the additional demands. USDA is coordinating public and private efforts intended to increase the amount of surplus food channeled through Emergency Food Assistance System (EFAS) providers by 33 percent by the year 2000. On November 23, 1996 President Clinton signed an executive memorandum directing all Federal agencies to join the USDA effort to recover excess food and established a Federal interagency task force on gleaned and food recovery. USDA, through the Food and Nutrition Service, administers several food assistance programs that help low-income households obtain adequate and nutritious diets. The largest USDA food assistance program, the Food Stamp Program, is designed to provide food assistance through normal channels of trade. The EFAS interacts closely with USDA food assistance programs by serving as a distribution outlet for Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) commodities and by providing temporary or supplemental food assistance to many of the same needy population served by USDA programs. A study of the Emergency Food Assistance System is going to be conducted. The study will be conducted in two phases. Currently, there is no sample frame from which to identify food banks, food pantries, and emergency kitchens for the study. Information collected during the first phase of the study will be used to compile frames of providers to be sampled and contacted for data collection. Economic Research Service (ERS) will collect information using questionnaires and telephone interviews to compile frames of providers to be sampled and contacted for second phased-data collection.

Need And Use Of The Information: ERS will collect information on providers' operating characteristics, service areas, resource base, quantity and type of food flowing into the system, number of people served, and providers' capacity to manage current and future changes in food demand and resources. Once the information is compiled, the frames of food banks, food pantries, and emergency kitchens will be used by the sampling statisticians for the study to select providers for the interviews. The contact information will be used by the data collection staff to facilitate advance