

lunch for public comments. Interpreters are available upon request at least 10 days prior to the meeting. Written comments may be submitted for the meeting record. Interested persons are encouraged to attend.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions regarding this meeting may be directed to Kath Collier, Management Analyst, Regional Ecosystem Office, 333 SW First Avenue, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208 (Phone: 503-808-2165).

Dated: July 9, 2003.

Anne Badgley,

Designated Federal Official.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

2003 Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability of program guidelines.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service is issuing a notice of the availability for the 2003 Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines. These guidelines were last updated in 1996. The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, through the Forest Service to develop, in cooperation with interested States, a Forest Legacy Program to identify and protect environmentally important private forest lands that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. The Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 amended the CFAA to provide for optional grants for States to carry out the program.

DATES: The 2003 Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines were effective June 30, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the 2003 Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines are available by contacting Rick Cooksey, Cooperative Forestry Staff, USDA Forest Service, Mail Stop Code 1123, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1123; via telephone at (202) 205-1469; via facsimile at (202) 205-1271; or via the world-wide web Internet: http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/fpl_guidelines.pdf.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rick Cooksey, USDA Forest Service, Cooperative Forestry Staff, (202) 205-1469; or rcooksey@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA) of 1978, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 2101 *et seq.*) provides authority for the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Secretary) to provide financial, technical, educational, and related assistance to States, communities, and private forest landowners. Section 1217 of Title XII of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (Pub. L. 101-624:104 Stat. 3359; 16 U.S.C. 2103c), also referred to as the 1990 Farm Bill, amends the CFAA and directs the Secretary to establish the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) to protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses. Through the 1996 Farm Bill (Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996; Pub. L. 104-127; Title III—Conservation; Subtitle G—Forestry; Section 374, Optional State Grants for Forest Legacy Program), the Secretary is authorized, at the request of a participating State, to make a grant to the State to carry out FLP in that State, including the acquisition by the State of lands and interests in lands. Under section 6 of the Act of March 1, 1911, (16 U.S.C. 515), and section 11(a) of the Department of Agriculture Organic Act of 1956 (7 U.S.C. 428(a)), the Secretary of Agriculture continues to have authority to acquire environmentally important forest lands and interests therein for Federal acquisition, including conservation easements and rights of public access, with title vested in the U.S. Government. Both the State grant and the Federal acquisition programs operate on a willing seller and a willing buyer basis.

In 1996, the Forest Service issued the Forest Legacy Program Implementation guidelines, which were an update of the 1992 guidelines. In 2000, the Forest Service embarked on an effort to update the 1996 Guidelines, to provide clear and current direction to meet the needs of a rapidly growing national program. As part of the process, several drafts were circulated with open public comment periods resulting in hundreds of comments received and integrated into a draft document. However, in November 2001, when the revision was almost complete, the Surveys and Investigations Staff of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee launched a 6-month investigation of the program. After a thorough review of FLP, the Congressional investigation findings required the Forest Service to develop additional direction related to key areas of the program, including: (1) The

appraisal and appraisal review process, (2) the project selection process, (3) the process for redirecting and reprogramming project funds, and (4) the monitoring requirements for conservation easements.

General Information

The final 2003 Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines reflect the work of a team of representatives from State lead agencies and Forest Service Washington Office and Regional offices. This team considered and integrated, to the extent practicable, all comments received throughout the process as well as the findings from the Congressional investigation. The guidelines will improve program operation, provide clarity on definitions, policy, and process, and respond to the findings of the Congressional report and direction.

The Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines have four components:

Part 1—General Program Guidelines: Program direction applicable to all aspects of FLP, including Assessment of Need development, eligibility criteria, project selection process, process for redirection and reprogramming of funds, cost share requirements, landowner participation, appraisal and appraisal review, and conservation easement information.

Part 2—State Grant Program Guidelines: Program direction applicable to States and Forest Service Regions, Areas, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry where a State has elected the State grant option and where ownership of lands or interests in lands is vested in a State or a subdivision of a State.

Part 3—Federal Acquisition Program Guidelines: Program direction applicable to States and Forest Service Regions, Areas, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry selecting the Federal acquisition and ownership process, where ownership of lands or interests in lands is vested in the United States.

Appendices: Numerous appendices that provide supplemental information such as references to Office of Management and Budget circulars, qualifications required of an appraiser or review appraiser, an example cost share calculations, and a sample of FLP graphics.

The revised 2003 Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines were mailed to State lead agencies, State Foresters (when different from the State lead agency), national partners, and Forest Service Regions, Areas, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry.

Dated: July 24, 2003.

Robin L. Thompson,

Associate Deputy Chief, State and Private Property.

[FR Doc. 03-19567 Filed 7-31-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Advance Request for Proposals (Advance RFP) Inviting Applications for Agriculture Innovation Center Demonstration Program Grants

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS or Agency) provides advance notice of the possible availability of up to \$10,000,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2003 to fund the establishment of agriculture innovation centers that are to provide assistance to agriculture producers in the development of value-added businesses. Availability of FY 2003 funding is contingent on the publication of the final Agriculture Innovation Centers grant regulation in FY 2003 with sufficient time for applications to be submitted and acted on by the Agency during FY 2003. We anticipate that the publication date for the related final rule will provide a very limited amount of time to submit applications.

Accordingly, this Advance RFP lists the information needed to submit an application for these funds to the extent the details can be provided today; the deadline for receipt and any substantive changes required by the final rule will be the subject of a future notice published as part of the final rule or in a contemporaneously published notice.

DATES: The deadline for receipt of an application is 4 p.m. e.s.t. on date which is five days after the publication date of the related final Agriculture Innovation Center rule in the **Federal Register**.

ADDRESSES: Hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using an express mail or overnight courier service should be sent to: Marc Warman, USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 4016, Washington, DC 20250; Telephone: (202) 720-8460. Applications sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be sent to: Marc Warman, USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service, STOP 3252, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-3252. Applications sent via e-mail attachment must be sent to:

marc.warman@usda.gov. Please note that due to recent security concerns, packages sent to the Agency have suffered significant delays. Entities wishing to apply for assistance should contact Marc Warman to receive further information and copies of the application package.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Haskell, Acting Deputy Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3250, Room 4016, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-3250, telephone: (202) 720-8460, or e-mail:

james.haskell@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Paperwork Reduction Act

Approval for the information collection requirements described in this Advance RFP was requested of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) pursuant to a new collection request submitted before the publication of a related proposed rulemaking to provide for the policies and procedures relating, in part, to the agriculture innovation center demonstration program. This proposed regulation, and the related notice and request for comment on this information collection were published in the **Federal Register** on June 13, 2003, at 68 FR 35321 ("Proposed Rule"). An OMB control number would ordinarily be published concurrent with publication of the related final rule ("Final Rule") after consideration of comments received in response to this paperwork notice. Accordingly, no OMB control number has been assigned at this time and the paperwork requirements included in this Advance RFP will not be effective until such time as the collection is approved and the control number assigned.

The deadline for the receipt of the application materials set forth in this RFP may not be earlier than the date the information collection is approved and the Final Rule is published. There is no guarantee that the information collection will be approved or that the related Final Rule will be published in time to obligate the funds available for Fiscal Year 2003.

In the event that a final rule has been promulgated and the information collect has been approved by awards cannot be made by September 30, 2003, it is USDA's intention that applications submitted after the effective date of the final rule will be held and considered for the award of Fiscal 2004 funds if and when Fiscal 2004 funds become available for this purpose.

Notice of Intent To Participate; Relationship Between This Advance RFP and the Proposed Rule

The policies and procedures proposed for this new demonstration program are outlined in the Proposed Rule. This Advance RFP must be read in conjunction with the Proposed Rule. Until such time as the policies and procedures are published as a final rule and the associated paperwork requirements are approved OMB, RBS may not accept applications.

Parties interested in applying under this program are encouraged, but not required, to send a notice of intent to participate to the Agency conforming to the suggested template provided at the end of this Advance RFP ("Notice of Intent"). Those who submit a Notice of Intent will be sent an e-mail or fax by the Agency when the Final Rule is published and the Agency will accept applications. Submission of a Notice of Intent does not obligate a prospective applicant to apply. If a prospective applicant elects to avail themselves of this courtesy notification, the Notice of Intent to participate must be e-mailed to *marc.warman@usda.gov*.

This Advance RFP calls for applications that meet the requirements published in the Proposed Rule and includes cross references to the Proposed Rule in order to minimize a duplication of published material. In the event the RBS is not able to timely obligate FY 2003 funds, applications received will be held for consideration for FY 2004 funding as and when available. It is not contemplated that a revised RFP will be issued for FY 2004 except as provided below. Only applications that are timely received in response to this Advance RFP will be eligible for either FY 2003 or FY 2004 funding, as applicable.

In the event the Agency is successful in making FY 2003 awards, and is later in a position to make FY 2004 awards, a new RFP will be issued for FY 2004 funding. Applications received in response to this Advance RFP will be held and considered for FY 2004 funding if and only if it is not possible to make timely FY 2003 awards.

Performance Criteria

The Proposed Rule contemplates that applicants will be asked to suggest performance goals against which the performance of their Centers and successes of their value added projects are to be measured. The Proposed Rule also sets forth evaluation criteria that are to be used in evaluating grant applications. It provides that a given RFP may supplement these evaluation