

# Notices

Federal Register

Vol. 63, No. 176

Friday, September 11, 1998

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.

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### National Agricultural Statistics Service

#### Notice of Intent To Revise a Currently Approved Information Collection

**AGENCY:** National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

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

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. No. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the National Agricultural Statistics Service's (NASS) intention to request a revision to a currently approved information collection, the 1997 Census of Agriculture, to include the Territory of American Samoa.

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by November 16, 1998 to be assured of consideration.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS:** Contact Rich Allen, Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4117 South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250-2000, (202) 720-4333.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Title:* 1997 Census of Agriculture.

*OMB Number:* 0535-0226.

*Expiration Date of Approval:* November 30, 1999.

*Type of Request:* Intent to revise a currently approved information collection.

*Abstract:* The original request for authorization to conduct the 1997 Census of Agriculture, prepared by the Bureau of the Census, provided for data to be collected for farm operations in the 50 States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands. The agriculture census in American Samoa

has historically been conducted as an extension of the Decennial Census program, and so was not included in the 1997 Census of Agriculture authorization. The transfer of the agriculture census program from the Bureau of the Census to the National Agricultural Statistics Service has created a void for agriculture data in American Samoa, as the Census Bureau no longer has staff involved in agriculture and will not be collecting agriculture data along with population data in the year 2000. The National Agricultural Statistics Service has recently been asked by the government of American Samoa to conduct an agriculture census there. The data on American Samoa agriculture are important to government officials trying to measure the economic health of the island group and provide crucial benchmarks for disaster relief agencies in times of natural disasters, such as hurricanes. The proposed census will be a joint effort between the National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; the Office of Insular Affairs, U.S. Department of Interior; and the American Samoa government.

*Estimate of Burden:* Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 30 minutes per response.

*Respondents:* Farms and households.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 2,500.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents:* 1,250 hours.

Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained without charge from Larry Gambrell, the Agency OMB Clearance Officer, at (202) 720-5778.

*Comments:* Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed 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 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; 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 or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Larry Gambrell, Agency OMB Clearance Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4162 South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250-2000. 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.

Signed at Washington, D.C., September 2, 1998.

**Rich Allen,**

*Associate Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service.*

[FR Doc. 98-24464 Filed 9-10-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-20-P

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

#### Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

**AGENCY:** Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces its intention to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS), pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) for the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. The draft PEIS will assess the potential environmental impacts of alternatives for administration of the EWP program. This program which provides funding and assistance to localities requesting EWP assistance to address watershed impairments, caused by a natural disaster, which pose an immediate threat to life and property.

A PEIS for the current EWP program was prepared in 1975. NRCS is now conducting a comprehensive review of the program which may result in substantive changes to improve the environmental, economic and technical soundness of activities conducted under the program. This draft PEIS will support management decisions on how best to revise the EWP program to

continue to effectively and efficiently meet EWP statutory requirements. NRCS and its cooperating agencies will analyze a range of reasonable alternatives to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations while minimizing, to the greatest extent practicable, any potential adverse environmental or socioeconomic impacts. The draft PEIS also provides the public a substantive opportunity to voice their concerns and ideas for improving the program. This notice informs the public of the proposal, and announces the dates, times, and places for public scoping meetings. It also, solicits public comment, and describes in general the preliminary draft PEIS proposed action and alternatives.

**SCOPING MEETINGS:** Six public scoping meetings will be held to provide information on the EWP program and to discuss the issues and alternatives relating to the program. Written and oral comments will be received. The meetings will be held on the following dates and locations:

*September 29, 1998*

Kansas City, Missouri—Holiday Inn-Airport, 11832 Plaza Circle, Kansas City, MO 64153, (816) 464-2345

*October 6, 1998*

College Park, GA—Georgia Int'l Convention Center, 1902 Sullivan Road, College Park, GA 30337, (770) 907-3074

*October 8, 1998*

Sacramento, California—The Hawthorne Suites Hotel, 321 Bercut Drive, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 441-1444

*October 20, 1998*

Bloomington, Minneapolis—Doubletree Guest Suites-Airport, 2800 W 80th Street, Bloomington, MN 55431-1205, (612) 884-4811

*October 22, 1998*

Albany, New York—Howard Johnson-Albany Center, 1375 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12206-1009, (518) 459-3100

*October 26, 1998*

Washington, D.C.—USDA, Jefferson Auditorium, 14th & Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20013

Each scoping meeting will be conducted in two sessions—the first in the afternoon from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and the second in the evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (except Washington, D.C., where only an afternoon session will be held).

**COMMENTS INVITED:** To ensure that the full range of issues and alternatives related to the EWP program are addressed, NRCS invites comments on the scope of this proposed draft PEIS. Written comments should be

postmarked by *close of business on October 30, 1998*, to ensure consideration. Comments postmarked after this date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**WHERE TO COMMENT:** Written comments on the scope of the draft PEIS and requests for copies of the draft PEIS information packages should be directed to: EWP—PEIS, Post Office Box 745, Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0745, telephone (toll free) 1-877-534-8692, or e-mail at ewp@mangi.com.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For matters relating to the EWP Program, please contact Warren M. Lee, Director, Watersheds and Wetlands Division, USDA-NRCS, Post Office Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013-2890; telephone: (202) 720-3527.

For matters relating to USDA/ NRCS compliance with NEPA please contact: Andree DuVarney, National Environmental Specialist, Ecological Sciences Division, USDA-NRCS, Post Office Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013-2890; telephone: (202) 720-4925.

Information may also be obtained from the NRCS Worldwide website at: <http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/BCS/enviro/nepa.htm> (general NEPA compliance information) <http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.html> (EWP program).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The EWP program funds and provides technical assistance to sponsoring organizations (entities of government) to implement emergency measures for runoff retardation and soil erosion prevention to assist in relieving imminent hazards to life and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion created by natural disasters that have caused or are causing sudden impairment of a watershed. The program is authorized by Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of May 17, 1950 (P.L. 81-516; 33 U.S.C. 701b-1) and by Section 403 of Title IV of the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978, (Pub. L. 95-334), as amended by Section 382 of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-127) 16 U.S.C. 2204. NRCS regulations implementing the EWP program are set forth in 7 CFR 624.

NEPA only requires an PEIS be prepared for major Federal actions significantly affecting the environment. It is NRCS's preliminary opinion that the programmatic decisions being made about the EWP program do not constitute such action, particularly when considered on a nation-wide basis. Nonetheless, NRCS considers NEPA and the PEIS process to be a useful tool to assist decision makers

under certain circumstances. Therefore, the agency has made the decision to prepare a PEIS in this case to take full advantage of NEPA's public participation provisions as a means of considering the concerns of individual members of the public and the state and local government sponsors who play a critical role in EWP and to fully consider the impacts of alternative EWP program policies and activities.

The final PEIS on the EWP program will supersede the PEIS prepared on the program in 1975. The purpose of the draft PEIS is to assess the impacts of a range of EWP programmatic alternatives. It will also factor in changes that are being proposed to the administrative rule such as the use of floodplain easements to address recurring hazards. NRCS expects that states may desire to tier to the national programmatic NEPA analysis to facilitate rapid response to EWP program emergency requirements in the future while maintaining adequate environmental review coverage for the necessary decision making.

The draft PEIS will begin to define the criteria to be used to approve projects for EWP funding. The Record of Decision resulting from the final PEIS would serve as guidance to NRCS state offices. The draft PEIS will likely use scenarios to evaluate the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of EWP measures in relation to their effectiveness in removing the immediate threat to loss of life and property. Tiering to the PEIS would allow NRCS decision makers to move forward quickly with project review.

At the same time that NRCS is preparing the draft PEIS, it is also revising the administrative rule for the EWP program (7 CFR 624), as well as revising the National EWP Manual, and the National EWP Handbook.

### Background

The EWP program was created by Congress to respond to emergencies resulting from natural disasters. USDA, NRCS administers the EWP program, providing technical and financial assistance for runoff retardation and soil erosion control to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural occurrences. Individuals are not eligible for EWP assistance unless represented by a project sponsor—a State government or a political subdivision of a State, such as a city, county, tribal organization, general improvement district, or a conservation district.

All EWP work is designed exclusively to reduce threats to life and property

while being economically, environmentally, and socially defensible and technically sound. EWP work can include removing debris from stream channels, road culverts, and bridges; reshaping and protecting eroded banks; correcting damaged drainage facilities; repairing levees and flood control structures; reseeding damaged areas; and purchasing floodplain easements. EWP work is not limited to any one set of prescribed measures. A case by case investigation of the needed work is made by NRCS. Under current provisions, the work can be done either through Federal or local contracts. NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the construction cost of the emergency measures. The remaining 25 percent must come from local sponsors and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services. Sponsors are responsible for providing landrights to do repair work, for securing the necessary permits, for furnishing the local cost share, and for operation and maintenance of the work installed.

Because the statutory authorities allow funding only for activities required to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by natural disasters, EWP funds cannot be used to install measures not essential to the reduction of hazards or to solve problems that existed before the disaster. EWP funds cannot be used to improve the level of protection above that which existed prior to the disaster, unless required by current technical standards. In addition, EWP cannot fund operation and maintenance work, repair private or public transportation facilities or utilities. EWP work also cannot affect downstream water rights. Work will not be performed on measures installed by another Federal agency, though EWP funds may be used to perform work on measures installed by a state or local agency.

#### **Description of Preliminary PEIS Alternatives**

NRCS has developed a "Proposed Action" alternative and the "No Action" alternative for the draft PEIS to initiate the NEPA process. The proposed action is not necessarily the final alternative, but it may be amended, refined, or supplemented, as appropriate, based on input by the public and agencies during the public scoping process. Additional alternatives also may emerge as well.

#### *Proposed Action Alternative*

The proposed action is for NRCS to continue administering the EWP program but with substantial revision for improvement, by providing funding and technical assistance to aid

appropriately sponsored entities in restoring watershed components to pre-disaster conditions.

Some of the changes NRCS is considering as part of the proposed action, and on which comments are requested, include:

1. Use floodplain easements in lieu of recovery work.
2. Dedicate 15 percent of the monies appropriated by Congress for floodplain easements.
3. Eliminate the use of the terms "Exigency" and "Nonexigency".
4. Establish the cost-share rate at up to 75 percent for all but limited resource sponsors who may receive up to 90 percent.
5. Stipulate that measures must be economically, socially, and environmentally defensible to be installed and identify criteria to meet those requirements.
6. Stipulate that urgent and compelling situations should be handled immediately after discovery.
7. Allow organizations certified by the Internal Revenue Service as 501c organizations to become sponsors of floodplain easements.
8. Use of Disaster Assistance Recovery Teams to train NRCS employees.
9. Evaluate ways to better coordinate EWP with other available emergency programs.

#### *No Action Alternative*

This alternative would continue NRCS administration of the EWP program as it is now carried out. Under this alternative, NRCS will not make any substantive changes in its role, the mechanisms for review of projects before funding or follow-up after completion, and with no changes in monitoring of exigency and non-exigency situations.

These alternatives are beginning points for discussion and, based upon comments received, modifications may be made to them and others may be added.

Signed in Washington, D.C., on September 3, 1998.

**Lawrence E. Clark,**  
*Deputy Chief for Programs.*

[FR Doc. 98-24409 Filed 9-10-98; 8:45am]  
BILLING CODE 3410-16-P

## **AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION**

### **Notification of a New System of Records; Privacy Act**

**AGENCY:** American Battle Monuments Commission.

**ACTION:** Notification of a new system of records.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a), the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) is publishing a notice of a new system of records, "Fund Raising Solicitation Files."

**DATES:** Persons wishing to comment on the proposed routine use must do so by 10 October 1998. ABMC has sent a report of a New System, as required by 5 U.S.C. 552a® of the Privacy Act, to the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Government Affairs of the Senate, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on 1 September 1998 pursuant to paragraph 4c of Appendix I to OMB Circular No. A-130. The new system will be effective 10 October 1998, unless comments dictate otherwise.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested individuals may comment on this publication by writing to LTC Theodore Gloukhoff, Courthouse Plaza II, Suite 500, 2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia, 22201-3367, Fax: (703) 696-6666. All comments received will be available for public inspection at that address.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** LTC Theodore Gloukhoff, Courthouse Plaza II, Suite 500, 2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia, 22201-3367, Tel: (703) 696-6908, Fax: (703) 696-6666.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Pursuant to Pub. L. 103-32, American Battle Monuments Commission is authorized to solicit and accept private contributions for the establishment of a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor members of the Armed Forces who served in World War II and to commemorate the participation of the United States in that war. ABMC proposes to establish a new system of records: "Fund Raising Solicitation Files." This system of records is being established in order to record responses to requests for contributions, actual contributions, gift acknowledgments and general information provided by contributors in memory of the national World War II effort.

**Theodore Gloukhoff,**  
*Director, Personnel and Administration.*

## **American Battle Monuments Commission**

**SYSTEM NAME:**

Fund Raising Solicitation Files.

**SYSTEM CLASSIFICATION:**

None.