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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Nutrition Service

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection, Comment Request—Food Stamp Program: Federal Collection of State Plan of Operations, Operating Guidelines and Forms

AGENCY: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is publishing for public comment a summary of a proposed information collection. The proposed collection is an extension of a collection currently approved under OMB No. 0584-0083.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by January 4, 1999, to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Send comments and requests for copies of this information collection to Joseph H. Pinto, Chief, State Administration Branch, Food Stamp Program, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302. Copies of the estimate of the information collection can be obtained by contacting Mr. Pinto.

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.

All comments will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval of the information collection. All comments will become a matter of public record.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Joseph H. Pinto, telephone number (703) 305-2383.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Operating Guidelines, Forms and Waivers.

OMB Number: 0584-0083.

Expiration Date: December, 1998.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Abstract: In accordance with section 11(e) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (the Act), 7 U.S.C. 2020(e), State agencies are required to submit a Plan of Operation specifying the manner in which the Food Stamp Program will be conducted. The State Plan of Operations, in accordance with current rules at 7 CFR 272.2, consists of a Federal/State Agreement, annual budget and activity statements, and specific attachments (such as plans if the State elects to conduct program information activities or provide nutrition educational services). State Plans of Operation are a one-time effort with updates that are provided as necessary.

Under section 16 of the Act, 7 U.S.C. 2025, the Secretary is authorized to pay each State agency an amount equal to 50 percent of all administrative costs involved in each State agency's operation of the Food Stamp Program. Under corresponding Food Stamp Program regulations at 7 CFR 272.2, the State agencies must submit annually to FNS for approval, a Budget Projection Statement (Form FNS-366A), which projects the total costs for major areas of Food Stamp Program operations, and a Program Activity Statement (Form FNS-366B), which provides a summary of Food Stamp Program operations during the preceding fiscal year. The reports are required to substantiate the costs the State agency expects to incur during the next fiscal year. Form FNS-366A is submitted annually by August 15 for the upcoming fiscal year and Form FNS-366B must be submitted no later than 45 days after the end of each State agency's fiscal year.

Beginning July 1997, State agencies were allowed to submit the FNS-366B

data electronically to the national database files stored in FNS' Food Stamp Program Integrated Information System in lieu of a paper report. The voluntary changeover from paper to electronic reporting of FNS-366B data by States was done as part of FNS' State Cooperative Data Exchange (SCDEX) Project. This project is being expanded over time as more FNS forms are transformed to electronic formats for State data entry. For FY 1997, the first year of FNS-366B electronic reporting, 5 State agencies submitted the FNS-366B data electronically and 48 State agencies submitted paper reports.

Under section 11(o) of the Act, 7 U.S.C. 2020(o), each State agency was required to develop a plan, no later than October 1, 1987, for implementing an automated data processing (ADP) and information retrieval system to administer the Food Stamp Program. Corresponding Food Stamp Program regulations at 7 CFR 277.18 require that a written plan of action, called an Advance Planning Document (APD), be prepared to acquire proposed ADP services, systems or equipment. The frequency of the APD submissions is at the discretion of the State agencies.

Under section 7(i) of the Act, 7 U.S.C. 2016(i), the Secretary is authorized to permit State agencies to implement on-line electronic benefit transfer (EBT) systems. The Secretary is authorized to establish standards for the required testing prior to implementation of any EBT system and analysis of the results of implementation in a limited pilot project area before expansion of the system. Any State requesting funding for an EBT system must submit an APD.

Respondents: State agencies that administer the Food Stamp Program.

Number of Respondents: 53.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent

Plan of Operation Updates: 53 State agencies once a year.

Form FNS-366A: 53 State agencies once a year.

Form FNS-366B: 53 State agencies once a year.

Advance Planning Documents: 25 State agencies once a year.

Advance Planning Documents for EBT Systems: 10 State agencies once a year.

EBT Reporting: 41 State agencies reporting four times a year.

Estimate of Burden

Plan of Operation Updates: The State agencies submit Plan updates at an estimate of 10 hours per respondent, or 530 total hours.

Form FNS-366A: The State agencies submit Form FNS-366A at an estimate of 13 hours per respondent, or 689 total hours.

Form FNS-366B: The total burden for the collection of information for Form FNS-366B is 1,526 hours. Forty-two State agencies submit Form FNS-366B automatically at an estimate of 18 hours per respondent, or 756 total hours. Eleven State agencies submit Form FNS-366B manually at an estimate of 70 hours per respondent or 770 hours.

Outreach Plans: FNS is planning an initiative to encourage States to do outreach to hard-to-serve population groups. Up to 25 States may submit an Outreach plan over the next year at an estimate of 1 hour per respondent or 25 total hours.

Advance Planning Documents: Approximately 25 State agencies submit an APD each year at an estimate of 15 hours per respondent or 375 total hours.

Advance Planning Documents for EBT Systems: Approximately 10 State agencies submit an APD each year for an EBT system at an estimate of 45 hours per respondent, or 450 total hours.

EBT Reporting: We estimate that approximately 41 State agencies with operational EBT systems will provide additional information about their EBT systems during the next burden period. The State agencies submit a report approximately 4 times a year at an estimate of one hour per response, or 164 total hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents

The total annual reporting and recordkeeping burden for OMB No. 0584-0083 is estimated to be 3,759, a decrease of 972 hours from the previous estimate and currently approved burden of 4,731 hours. Since the last notice on this burden in 1996, the number of States with operational EBT systems has increased to 35 States, leaving fewer States who will need to submit an Advance Planning Document for an EBT system. The decrease in the burden is due primarily to a decrease in the estimate of the number of States each year who may submit an Advance Planning Document for an EBT system.

Dated: October 26, 1998.

Samuel Chambers, Jr.,

Acting Administrator.

[FR Doc. 98-29487 Filed 11-3-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-30-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service****Committee of Scientists Meeting**

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Committee of Scientists will hold a public teleconference call on Thursday, November 19, 1998. The teleconference call will begin at 2:30 p.m. and end at 5:00 p.m. (eastern standard time). The purpose of the telephone conference call is for the Committee of Scientists to continue discussion of its report and recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the Forest Service. The public is invited to attend this teleconference call and may be provided an opportunity to comment on the Committee of Scientists' deliberations during the teleconference, only at the request of the Committee.

DATES: The teleconference call will be held Thursday, November 19, 1998, from 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. (eastern standard time).

ADDRESSES: The teleconference will be held at the USDA Forest Service headquarters, Auditor's Building, 201 14th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., in the Roosevelt Conference Room and at all Regional Offices of the Forest Service, which are listed in the table under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

Written comments on improving land and resource management planning may be sent to the Committee of Scientists, P.O. Box 2140, Corvallis, OR 97339. Also, the Committee may be accessed via the Internet at www.cof.orst.edu/org/scicomm/.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For additional information concerning the teleconferences, contact Bob Cunningham, Designated Federal Official to the Committee of Scientists, by telephone (202) 205-1523.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The public may attend the teleconference at the following field locations:

USDA Forest Service Regional Office Locations

Region 1—Northern Region: Federal Building, 200 E Broadway, Missoula, MT

Region 2—Rocky Mountain Region: 740 Simms St., Golden, CO

Region 3—Southwestern Region: Federal Building, 517 Gold Ave., SW, Albuquerque, NM

Region 4—Intermountain Region: Federal Building, 324 25th St., Ogden, UT

Region 5—Pacific Southwest Region: 630 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA

Region 6—Pacific Northwest Region: 333 SW 1st Ave., Portland, OR

Region 8—Southern Region: 1720 Peach Road NW, Atlanta, GA

Region 9—Eastern Region: 310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Room 500, Milwaukee, WI

Region 10—Alaska Region (office will open early): Federal Office Building, 709 W. 9th St., Juneau, AK

The Committee of Scientists is chartered to provide scientific and technical advice to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the Forest Service on improvements that can be made to the National Forest System land and resource management planning process (62 FR 43691; August 15, 1997). Notice of the names of the appointed Committee members was published December 16, 1997 (62 FR 65795).

Dated: October 28, 1998.

Donald L. Meyer,

Acting Deputy Chief, National Forest System.

[FR Doc. 98-29491 Filed 11-3-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS**Agenda and Notice of Public Meeting of the New Hampshire Advisory Committee**

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, that a meeting of the New Hampshire Advisory Committee to the Commission will convene at 9:00 a.m. and adjourn at 4:30 p.m. on November 19, 1998, at the Rivier Collage, Dion Center Conference Room, 420 Main Street, Nashua, New Hampshire 03060. The Committee will hold the first of three planned briefings based on its project, "A Biennial Report on the Status of Civil Rights in New Hampshire."

Persons desiring additional information, or planning a presentation to the Committee, should contact Committee Chairperson Nury Marquez, 603-627-5127, or Ki-Taek Chun, Director of the Eastern Regional Office, 202-376-7533 (TDD 202-376-8116). Hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign language interpreter should contact the Regional Office at least ten (10) working days before the scheduled date of the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the Commission.