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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

7 CFR Part 1700

General Information, Organization and Functions, and Loan Making Authority

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) hereby revises its description of its functions and responsibilities and delegations of authority to reflect recent changes in organizational structure, update RUS addresses and phone numbers, and add information about electronic availability of information. These revisions are intended to guide and assist the public.

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 2, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 4034-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 1522, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: 202-720-0736. FAX 202-720-4120. e-mail fheppe@rus.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6941 *et seq.*) required the Secretary of Agriculture to establish and maintain the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) within the Department. On October 20, 1994, Secretary's Memorandum 1010-1, abolished the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) and established RUS as its successor and as required by the Reorganization Act.

The functions of RUS include administration of the electric and telecommunications loan programs formerly administered by the Rural Electrification Administration, and of

the water and waste disposal loan and grant programs formerly administered by the Rural Development Administration. This rule describes the current organizational structure of RUS and the methods by which its functions are channeled.

This rule relates to internal agency management. Therefore, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553, notice of proposed rulemaking and opportunity to comment thereon are not required, this rule may be effective immediately. Further, since this rule relates to internal agency management, it is exempt from the provisions of Executive Order 12866 and Executive Order 12988. Finally, this is not a rule as defined by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) (the Act), and therefore, the Act does not apply.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 1700

Authority delegations (Government agencies), Community development, Community facilities, Electric power, Freedom of information, Grant programs—communications, Grant programs—education, Grant programs—housing and community development, Loan programs—communications, Loan programs—education, Loan programs—energy, Loan Program—housing and community development, Organization and functions (Government agencies), Rural areas, Telecommunications, Telephone, Waste treatment and disposal, Water supply.

Accordingly, 7 CFR part 1700 is revised to read as follows:

PART 1700—GENERAL INFORMATION

Subpart A—General

Sec.

- 1700.1 General.
- 1700.2 Availability of information.
- 1700.3 Requests under the Freedom of Information Act.
- 1700.4 Public comments on proposed rules.
- 1700.5—1700.24 [Reserved]

Subpart B—Agency Organization and Functions

- 1700.25 Office of the Administrator.
- 1700.26 Deputy Administrators.
- 1700.27 Electric Program.
- 1700.28 Telecommunications Program.
- 1700.29 Water and Environmental Programs.
- 1700.30 Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program.
- 1700.31 Program Accounting and Regulatory Analysis.

- 1700.32 Financial Services Staff.
- 1700.33—1700.49 [Reserved]

Subpart C—Loan and Grant Approval Authorities

- 1700.50—1700.52 [Reserved]
 - 1700.53 Persons serving as Acting Administrator.
 - 1700.54 Electric Program.
 - 1700.55 Telecommunications Program.
 - 1700.56 Water and Environmental Programs.
 - 1700.57 Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program.
- Authority:** 5 U.S.C. 301, 552; 7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*, 1921 *et seq.*, 6941 *et seq.*; 7 CFR 2.7.

Subpart A—General

§ 1700.1 General.

(a) The Rural Electrification Administration (REA) was established by Executive Order No. 7037 on May 11, 1935. Statutory authority was provided by the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (RE Act) (7 U.S.C. 901). The RE Act established REA as a lending agency with responsibility for developing a program for rural electrification.

(b) On October 28, 1949, the RE Act was amended to authorize REA to make loans to improve and extend telephone service in rural areas. The Rural Telephone Bank (RTB), an agency of the United States, was established by amendment to the RE Act, approved May 7, 1971. The Administrator of RUS serves as the Bank's chief executive with the title of Governor.

(c) The Secretary of Agriculture (Secretary) established the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) on October 20, 1994, pursuant to the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, (7 U.S.C. 6941 *et seq.*) RUS was assigned responsibility for administering electric and telecommunications loan and loan guarantee programs previously administered by REA, including programs of the Rural Telephone Bank (RTB), and water and waste loans and grants previously administered by the Rural Development Administration, along with other functions as the Secretary determined appropriate. The rights, interests, obligations, duties, and contracts previously vested in REA were transferred to, and vested in RUS.

§ 1700.2 Availability of information.

(a) The offices of RUS are located in the South Building of the United States Department of Agriculture at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW,