

project site to discuss and receive comments on the draft EIS. It will be scheduled no sooner than 15 days after the release of the draft EIS. It will be announced in the same manner as the scoping meeting, and the list of parties receiving an individual notification will also be developed in the same manner. The meeting will be chaired by the State Director or a designee and will be fully recorded so that a transcript can be produced. The applicant will be requested to assist in obtaining a facility for holding the meeting. To the extent possible, this meeting will be combined with public meetings required by other involved agencies.

(2) Whenever a public information meeting is held as part of the completion of an environmental assessment, it will be scheduled, announced, and held in generally the same manner as a public information meeting for an EIS. However, a minimum of 7 days advance notice of the meeting is sufficient, and a transcript of the meeting will not be required. Rather a summary of the meeting to include the major issues raised will be prepared by the FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 official who chaired the meeting.

(d) *Distribution of environmental documents.* FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 officials will promptly provide to interested parties, upon request, copies of environmental documents, including environmental assessments, draft and final environmental impact statements, and records of decision. Interested parties can request these materials from the appropriate State Director or approval official for project activities and from the Administrator on other activities subject to environmental review.

§ 1940.332 Emergencies.

(a) *Action requiring EIS.* When an emergency circumstance makes it necessary to take an action with significant environmental impact without observing the provisions of this subpart or the CEQ regulations, the Administrator will consult with CEQ about alternative arrangements before the proposed action is taken. It must be recognized that CEQ's regulations limit such arrangements to actions necessary to

control the immediate impacts of the emergency. Other actions remain subject to NEPA review. For purposes of this subpart, an emergency circumstance is defined as one involving an immediate or imminent danger to public health or safety.

(b) *Action not requiring EIS.* When an emergency circumstance makes it necessary to take an action with apparent non-significant environmental impact without observing the provisions of this subpart or the CEQ regulations, the Administrator will be so notified. The Administrator reserves the authority to waive or amend all procedural aspects of this subpart relating to the preparation of environmental assessments including but not limited to the applicant's submission of Form FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 1940-20, public notice requirements and/or their associated comment periods, the timing of the assessment process, and the content of environmental review documents. Alternative arrangements will be established on a case by case basis taking into account the nature of the emergency and the time reasonably available to respond to it. These alternative arrangements will, to the extent possible, attempt to achieve the substantive requirements of this subpart such as avoiding impacts to important land resources, when practicable, and minimizing potential adverse environmental impacts. In all cases, the environmental findings and determinations required for Class I and Class II assessments must be executed by the appropriate FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 officials prior to approval of the action and be based upon the best information available under the circumstances and the prescribed alternative arrangements. (Refer to paragraph (a) of this section should the approval official for the action determine that an EIS is necessary.) Additionally, all applicable consultation and coordination procedures required by law or regulation will be initiated with the appropriate Federal or State agency(s). Such procedures will be accomplished in the most expeditious manner possible and modified to the extent necessary and mutually agreeable between FmHA or its

successor agency under Public Law 103-354 and the affected agency(s). The provisions of this paragraph are limited to the same emergency circumstances and scope of action as specified in paragraph (a) of this section.

§ 1940.333 Applicability to planning assistance.

The award of FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 funds for the purpose of providing technical assistance or planning assistance will not be subject to any environmental review. However, applicants will be expected to consider in the development of their plans and to generally document within their plans:

(a) The existing environmental quality and the important environmental factors within the planning area, and

(b) The potential environmental impacts on the planning area of the plan as well as the alternative planning strategies that were reviewed.

§ 1940.334 Direct participation of State Agencies in the preparation of FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 EISs.

FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 may be assisted by a State Agency in the preparation of an EIS subject to the conditions indicated below. At no time, however, is FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 relieved of its responsibilities for the scope, objectivity, and content of the entire statement of any other responsibility under NEPA.

(a) The FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 applicant for financial assistance is a State Agency having statewide jurisdiction and responsibility for the proposed action;

(b) FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 furnishes guidance to the State Agency as to the scope and content of the impact statement and participates in the preparation;

(c) FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 independently evaluates the statement and rectifies any major deficiencies prior to its circulation by the Agency as an EIS;

(d) FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 provides,

early in the planning stages of the project, notification to and solicits the views of any land management entity (State or Federal Agency responsible for the management or control of public lands) concerning any portion of the project and its alternatives which may have significant impacts upon such land management entities; and

(e) If there is any disagreement on the impacts addressed by the review process outlined in paragraph (d) of this section, FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 prepares a written assessment of these impacts and the views of the land management entities for incorporation into the draft impact statement.

§ 1940.335 Environmental review of FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 proposals for legislation.

(a) As stated in §1940.312(d)(4) of this subpart, all FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 proposals for legislation will receive an environmental assessment. The definition of such a proposal is contained in §1508.17 of the CEQ regulations.

(b) The environmental assessment and, when necessary, the EIS will be prepared by the responsible Agency staff that is developing the legislation.

(c) If an EIS is required, it will be prepared according to the requirements of §1506.8 of the CEQ Regulations.

§ 1940.336 Contracting for professional services.

(a) Assistance from outside experts and professionals can be secured for the purpose of completing EIS, assessments, or portions of them. Such assistance will be secured according to the Federal and Agriculture Procurement Regulations contained in chapters 1 and 4 of title 48 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(b) The contractor will be selected by FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 in consultation with any cooperating agencies. In order to avoid any conflict of interest, contractors competing for the work will be required to execute a disclosure statement specifying that they have no financial or other interest in the outcome of the project.