

§ 634.28

7 CFR Ch. VI (1-1-14 Edition)

excess of the cost share for all identifiable units as may be requested by the participant.

(g) *Material inspection and analysis.* When authorizations for payments to suppliers are specified, the administering agency, its representatives, or the Government reserve the right to inspect, sample, and analyze materials or services prior to their use.

(h) *Assignments, set-offs, and claims.* (1) A State or local administering agency may allow the assignment of payments to the extent provided by State law. When ASCS is designated as the administering agency, assignments by any participant who may be entitled to cost-share payment under the program are prohibited unless they are made in accordance with the provisions of section 203, Title 31, U.S.C., as amended, and section 15, Title 41, U.S.C., as amended.

(2) If any participant to whom compensation is payable under RCWP is indebted to the United States and such indebtedness is listed on the county register of indebtedness maintained by the County ASC committee, the compensation due the participant must be used (set-off) to reduce that indebtedness. Indebtedness to USDA is to be given first consideration. Deductions for setoffs involving a non-resident alien shall be made as provided by 26 U.S.C. 871. Setoffs made pursuant to this section are not to deprive the participant of any right to contest the justness of the indebtedness involved, either by administrative appeal or by legal action.

(3) Any cost-share payment due any participant shall be allowed without deduction of claims for advances except as provided for above and without regard to any claim or lien against any crop, or proceeds thereof, in favor of the participant or any other creditor.

(i) *Access to land unit and records.* Any authorized administering agency, or NRCS employees or agents, shall have the right of access at reasonable times to land under application or contract, and the right to examine any program records to ascertain the accuracy of any representations made in the application or contract. This is limited to the right to furnish technical assist-

ance and to inspect work performed under the contract.

(j) *Suspension of payments.* No cost-share payments will be made pending a decision on whether or not a contract violation has occurred.

(k) *Ineligible payments.* The filing of requests for payment for BMP's not carried out, or for BMP's carried out in such a manner that they do not meet contract specifications, constitutes a violation of the contract.

§ 634.28 Appeals not related to contract violations.

(a) The participant may, prior to execution of the contract, request that the administering agency review or reconsider criteria being used in developing his or her contract. Such review or reconsideration may include the eligibility of BMP's which had not been approved for application in the project area, cost-sharing levels for BMP's, priorities for developing water quality plans, and standards and specifications.

(1) If verbal agreement is not reached, the participant may make a written request within 30 days after receiving notice of the decision of his or her verbal request.

(2) The administering agency shall have 30 days in which to make a decision and notify the participant in writing.

(3) The decision of the administering agency shall be final.

(b) If, after the contract has been executed, the participant and the administering agency are unable to reach written agreement relative on matters which are not related to contract violations, the participant may request and receive a review by the appeals board. The administering agency will:

(1) Notify the participant, in writing, of the date the appeals board will consider the appeal.

(2) Within 30 days after receiving the administering agency's notice, the participant may file a request to appear and present oral and other evidence. If the participant does not request an appearance, the administering agency appeals board will decide the dispute on

the evidence available to them, including statements or briefs of the authorized representatives of the soil conservation district and NRCS. The administering agency shall notify the participants of the appeals board's decision in writing. There shall be no further administrative appeal of this decision.

(c) *Filing of documents.* A document is considered filed when it is received in the office of the person or agency concerned.

§ 634.29 Violations.

(a) *Actions causing violations.* The following actions constitute violation of a contract by a participant:

(1) Knowingly or negligently damaging or causing BMP's to become impaired.

(2) Adopting a land use or practice during the contract period which tends to defeat the purposes of the program.

(3) Failing to comply with the terms of the contract.

(4) Filing a false claim.

(5) Misusing authorizations for payment.

(b) *Contract termination as a result of violations.* (1) By signing a contract, the participant agrees to forfeit all rights to further cost-sharing payments under a contract and to refund all cost-share payments received, with interest, if the administering agency, with the concurrence of the State Conservationist, NRCS, determines that:

(i) There was a violation of the contract during the time the participant had control of the land; and

(ii) The violation was of such a nature as to warrant termination of the contract.

(2) The participant shall be obligated to refund all cost-share payments and all cost shares paid under authorizations, with interest, at the rates established by the Secretary of the Treasury pursuant to Pub. L. 92-41, 85 Stat. 97.

(c) *Payment adjustments and refunds resulting from violations.* (1) By signing a contract, the participant agrees to refund cost-share payments received under the contract or to accept payment adjustments if the administering agency determines and the State Conservationist, NRCS, concurs that:

(i) There was a violation of the contract during the time the participant had control of the land; and

(ii) The nature of the violation does not warrant termination of the contract.

(2) Payment adjustments may include decreasing the rate of cost share, or deleting from the contract a cost-share commitment, or withholding cost-share payments earned but not paid. The participant who signs the contract may be obligated to refund cost-share payments.

§ 634.30 Appeals in USDA administered projects.

The participant in a USDA-administered RCWP project may appeal decisions of the administering agency in accordance with part 614 of this title.

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§ 634.31 Appeals of contract violations.

(a) *Scope.* This section prescribes the regulations dealing with contract violations. The Administrator, NRCS, reserves the right to revise or supplement any of the provisions of this section at any time if the action does not adversely affect the participant, or if the participant has been officially notified before this action is taken.

(b) *Determination by administering agency.* Upon notification that a contract violation may have occurred, the administering agency:

(1) Determines that a violation did not occur or that the violation was of such a nature that no further action is to be taken; or

(2) Determines that a violation did occur and the participant agrees to accept a written penalty of forfeiture, refund, payment adjustment, or termination. If no agreement is reached, further action is to be taken.

(c) *Notice of possible violation.* (1) When the administering agency is notified that a contract violation may have occurred and the matter is not resolved under §634.31(b)(1) it shall notify, in writing, each participant who signed the contract of the alleged violation. This notice setting forth the alleged violation may be personally delivered or sent by certified or registered mail.