

§ 625.7

(3) Estimated improvement of biological diversity, if enrolled;

(4) Potential for increased capability of carbon sequestration, if enrolled;

(5) Availability of contribution of non-Federal funds;

(6) Significance of forest ecosystem functions and values;

(7) Estimated cost-effectiveness of the particular restoration cost-share agreement, contract, or easement, and associated HFRP restoration plan; and

(8) Other factors identified in a HFRP sign-up notice.

(b) NRCS may place higher priority on certain forest ecosystems based regions of the State or multi-State area where restoration of forestland may better achieve NRCS programmatic and sign-up goals and objectives.

(c) Notwithstanding any limitation of this part, NRCS may enroll eligible lands at any time in order to encompass project areas subject to multiple land ownership or otherwise to achieve program objectives. Similarly, NRCS may, at any time, exclude otherwise eligible lands if the participation of the adjacent landowners is essential to the successful restoration of the forest ecosystem and those adjacent landowners are unwilling to participate.

(d) If available funds are insufficient to accept the highest ranked application, and the applicant is not interested in reducing the acres offered to match available funding, NRCS may select a lower ranked application that can be fully funded. In cases where HFRP funds are not sufficient to cover the costs of an application selected for funding, the applicant may lower the cost of the application by changing the duration of the easement or agreement or reducing the acreage offered, unless these changes result in a reduction of the application ranking score below that of the score of the next available application on the ranking list.

§ 625.7 Enrollment of easements, contracts, and agreements.

(a) *Offers of enrollment.* Based on the priority ranking, NRCS will notify an affected landowner of tentative acceptance into the program. This notice of tentative acceptance into the program does not bind NRCS or the United States to enroll the proposed project in

7 CFR Ch. VI (1–15 Edition)

HFRP, nor does it bind the landowner to convey an easement, or to contract or agree to HFRP activities. The letter notifies the landowner that NRCS intends to continue the enrollment process on their land unless otherwise notified by the landowner.

(b) *Acceptance of offer of enrollment.* An agreement to purchase or a restoration cost-share agreement or contract will be presented by NRCS to the landowner which will describe the easement, agreement, or contract area; the easement, agreement, or contract terms and conditions; and other terms and conditions for participation that may be required by NRCS.

(c) *Effect of the acceptance of the offer.* After the agreement to purchase or restoration cost-share agreement or contract is executed by NRCS and the landowner, the land will be considered enrolled in the HFRP. For easements, NRCS will proceed with various easement acquisition activities, which may include conducting a survey of the easement area, securing necessary subordination agreements, procuring title insurance, and conducting other activities necessary to record the easement or implement the HFRP, as appropriate for the enrollment option being considered. For restoration cost-share agreements and contracts, the landowner will proceed to implement the restoration plan with technical assistance and cost-share from NRCS.

(d) *Withdrawal of offers.* Prior to execution of an agreement to purchase, a restoration cost-share agreement, or contract between the United States and the landowner, NRCS may withdraw the land from enrollment at any time due to lack of availability of funds, inability to clear title, or other reasons. An agreement to purchase will be void, and the offer withdrawn, if not executed by the landowner within the time specified.

§ 625.8 Compensation for easements and 30-year contracts.

(a) *Determination of easement payment rates.*

(1) NRCS will offer to pay not less than 75 percent, nor more than 100 percent of the fair market value of the enrolled land during the period the land is subject to the easement, less the fair