Department of Commerce. Responsibility for the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics, which is a discretionary committee, was transferred, along with its allocated slot, to USDA with the census of agriculture program.

The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics has provided input and direction to the census of agriculture program since the committee was first established on July 16, 1962. It has been particularly critical to have the committee as a valuable resource to USDA during the transfer of the census from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The purpose of the committee is to make recommendations on census of agriculture operations including questionnaire design and content, publicity, publication plans, and data dissemination. Comments are requested on the establishment of this committee at USDA.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by January 7, 1999 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Donald M. Bay, Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4117 South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250–2000, (202) 720–2707.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. appendix), notice is hereby given that the Secretary of Agriculture intends to reestablish the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics, hereafter referred to as Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the conduct of the periodic censuses and surveys of agriculture, other related surveys, and the types of agricultural information to obtain from respondents. The committee also prepares recommendations regarding the content of agriculture reports, and presents the views and needs for data of major suppliers and users of agriculture statistics.

The Secretary of Agriculture has determined that the work of the Committee is in the public interest and relevant to the duties of USDA. No other advisory committee or agency of USDA is performing the tasks that will be assigned to the Committee.

The Committee, appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, shall consist of 25 members representing a broad range of disciplines and interests, including, but not limited to, agricultural economists, rural sociologists, farm policy analysts, educators, State agriculture representatives, and agriculture-related business and marketing experts.

A representative of the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, serves as an ex-officio member of the Committee.

The committee draws on the experience and expertise of its members to form a collective judgment concerning agriculture data collected and the statistics issued by NASS. This input is vital to keep current with shifting data needs in the rapidly changing agricultural environment and keep NASS informed of emerging developments and issues in the food and fiber sector that can affect agriculture statistics activities.

The Secretary of Agriculture invites individuals to comment on the reestablishment of this committee at USDA.

Equal opportunity practices, in line with USDA policies, will be followed in all membership appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

Signed at Washington, D.C., October 27, 1998.

Reba Evans,

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration.

[FR Doc. 98–29346 Filed 11–2–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–20–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Highline Breaks Watershed, Otero & Pueblo Counties, CO

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), DOA.

ACTION: Notice of a finding of no significant impact.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR Part 1500); and the NRCS Regulations (7 CFR Part 560); the NRCS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, gives notice that an environmental impact statement is not being prepared for the Highline Breaks Watershed, Otero and Pueblo Counties, Colorado.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Stephen F. Black, State Conservationist, 655 Parfet St., Room E200C, Lakewood, CO 80215–5517. (303) 236–2886, Extension 202.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The environmental assessment of this federally assisted action indicates that the project will not cause significant local, regional, or national impacts on the environment. As a result of these findings, Stephen Black, State Conservationist, has determined that the preparation and review of an environmental impact statement are not needed for this project.

The project purpose is a plan for agricultural water management watershed protection. The planned works of improvement include accelerated technical assistance for implementing land treatment practices such as nutrient management, residue management, irrigation water management, and enduring practices to reduce deep percolation to improve water quality and protect the resource base.

The Notice of Finding No Significant Impact (FONSI), has been forwarded to the Environmental Protection Agency and to various Federal, State, and local agencies and interested parties. A limited number of copies of the FONSI are available to fill single copy requests at the above address. Basic data developed during the environmental assessment are on file and may be reviewed by contacting Stuart N. Simpson.

No administrative action on implementation of the proposal will be taken until 30 days after the date of this publication in the **Federal Register**.

Stephen F. Black,

State Conservationist.

(This activity is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under NO. 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention, and is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which required intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials).

Finding of No Significant Impact for Highline Breaks Watershed Otero and Pueblo Counties, Colorado

Introduction

The Highline Breaks Watershed is a federally assisted action authorized for planning under Public Law 83–566, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act. An environmental assessment was undertaken in conjunction with the development of the watershed plan. This assessment was conducted in consultation with local, state, and federal agencies as well as with interested organizations and individuals. Data developed during the

assessment are available for public review at the following location: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 655 Parfet Street, Suite E200C, Lakewood, CO 80215–5517.

Recommended Action

The recommended plan is composed of management and enduring conservation practices to reduce deep percolation, runoff and irrigation induced erosion which will improve water quality of both surface and groundwater, the Arkansas River, as well as protect the resource base.

It is expected that 250 long-term land treatment contracts will be written during the project's life. Approximately 31,000 acres will be treated through project action.

The primary purposes are: (1) (watershed protection)—protect the soil resource base from excessive irrigation induced erosion, sedimentation, and reduce negative water quality impacts to surface and groundwater, including the Arkansas River, from nitrate loading, selenium, sediment, and salts; (2) (agriculture water management)—improve application uniformity.

Effects of Recommended Action

Expected impacts include: improved surface and groundwater quality, improved human health and safety, significant cropland erosion reduction, reduced sediment delivered to surface water bodies, reduced pollutant loading of wetlands, fishery habitat impairment reduced, improved wildlife habitat, reduced irrigation labor costs, reduced fertilizer use, reduced irrigation system operation and maintenance costs, greater irrigation effectiveness.

The proposed action will reduce nitrates, sediments, salts, and other pollutants leached into the ground water and delivered to the Arkansas River, thereby improving the water quality. It will also protect the watershed resource base by reducing irrigation induced erosion.

Significant negative effects to wetlands are not expected. However, if mitigation is necessary, it will be accomplished on a function for function basis.

Potentially, a slight improvement of the upland wildlife habitat is expected due to an increase in cover, forage, and water quality.

The proposed project will encourage and promote the agricultural enterprises in the watershed through education and accelerated technical and financial assistance. This will help maintain agriculture as a significant component in the area economy.

A list of the cultural resource sites within the watershed has been obtained from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Their relationship to planned conservation measures was evaluated. Their survey concludes that no significant adverse impacts will occur to known cultural resources in the watershed should the plan be implemented. If however, during construction of enduring measures a new site is identified, construction will stop and the (SHPO) will be notified.

There are no wilderness areas in the watershed.

There are no threatened or endangered species known to exist in the watershed. However, prairie dog towns which could provide habitat for the black-footed ferret, will not be disturbed during project action.

As stated above, the primary objective of the project is to reduce the nitrates and selenium entering the Arkansas River and groundwater. Land treatment measures will reduce nitrate loading to ground and surface waters in the watershed as well as maintaining selenium levels within State and EPA standards.

Wildlife habitat may be temporarily disturbed in areas where enduring measures are implemented. It will recover however, within a short period of time.

The fishery in the Arkansas River will be impacted to a lesser degree by nitrates, selenium, and sediment after the project is complete.

No significant adverse environmental impacts will result from the installation of conservation measures. Some short-term habitat disturbances may occur during construction of enduring practices on irrigated cropland.

Alternatives

The recommended action is the most practical means of reducing the nitrates, selenium, salts, and sediment entering the Arkansas River and groundwater, thus protecting the resource base in the watershed. Since no significant adverse environmental impacts will result from installation of the measures and no other alternatives could meet the test of completeness, effectiveness, efficiency, and acceptability this alternative becomes the only viable candidate plan. The no action alternative was used for comparison purposes.

Consultation—Public Participation

The West and East Otero Soil Conservation Districts requested in March, 1989, that the watershed be considered for a Public Law 566 watershed project. A field review was made on March 22, 1989. The review team found that improved irrigation effectiveness, water quality, and watershed protection was needed. The Soil Conservation District and the NRCS Field Office decided that detailed information collection would be the first priority. Data on water quantity, quality, and practice needs were gathered. Ninety percent of the landowners expressed an interest in this project. The sponsors made an application for Public Law 566 planning assistance May 1, 1989.

The State Soil Conservation Board formally accepted the application on September 6, 1989. The Soil Conservation Services' West National Technical Center (WNTC) made a field reconnaissance October 25, 1989. They met with the irrigation company personnel, field offices, and conservation district officials. It was decided further data was needed to quantify the off-site effects from project action. In November, 1994, the NRCS Field Office, area staff and state staff developed a schedule to complete a preauthorization plan and plan of work. A revised application was developed in June, 1995. As a result, a water quality plan was developed for the area.

On June 26, 1995, a public scoping meeting was held to discuss the problems, needs, and possible effects from a project. Federal, State, and local agencies, and the general public were invited. This group helped give direction to the NRCS planners. A public response analysis was completed on the responses.

An environmental evaluation meeting was also held on June 26, 1995, to identify environmental concerns and issues and discuss how best to address those concerns.

Numerous newspaper articles, newsletters, and radio public service announcements have been aired to provide public information. Public meetings with the news media in attendance were held to gain input and inform the public.

A meeting was held with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office, area staff, and sponsors in March, 1996, on the preauthorization report. A sponsors meeting was held in June, 1996, to determine the desirability of pursuing a planning authorization and review the preliminary plan. Potential alternatives and the responsibilities of each sponsor and NRCS were stressed in discussions. The SCD's have the right of eminent domain under authority established by state law. If needed, they are willing to fulfill their agreements to see that a plan is formulated and implemented. Planning

authorization was requested July 17, 1996.

The SCD boards have met regularly and provided positive leadership to the furthering of conservation and improvement of the watershed. Ongoing water quality, quantity and management practices are being installed by a combination of landowner, district and state funds. The two district boards cooperated in getting a HUA and 319 demonstration project, approved in FY–91, to show the value of surge irrigation and irrigation water management in the watershed area. The projects were enthusiastically accepted by the farmers.

In September, 1996, the watershed was approved for planning. A meeting was held in October, 1996, with field and area staffs, the State Water Resources Planning staff, and sponsors to review the Plan of Work and develop assignments to complete the watershed plan. A scoping meeting and environmental assessment meeting was held at this time.

The Watershed Plan was developed and reviewed with the sponsors at their board meetings on May 14, 1997. They requested that NRCS have a public meeting to present the plan to all interested parties. On December 3, 1997, a public meeting was held in Rocky Ford, Colorado. It was the consensus of those present to move forward into inter-agency review.

Specific consultation was conducted with the State Historic Preservation Officer concerning cultural resources in the watershed.

Public meetings were held throughout the planning process to keep all interested parties informed of the study progress and to obtain public input to the plan and environmental evaluation.

Agency consultation and public participation to date has shown no unresolved conflicts related to the project plan.

Conclusion

The Environmental Assessment summarized above indicates that this federal action will not cause significant local, regional, or national impact on the environment. Therefore, based on the above findings, I have determined that an environmental impact statement for the Highline Breaks Watershed Plan is not required.

Dated: October 28, 1998.

Stephen F. Black,

State Conservationist.

[FR Doc. 98–29379 Filed 11–2–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–16–M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Associated Electric Cooperative; Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has made a finding of no significant impact with respect to its action related to the construction of a 100 megawatt simple cycle combustion turbine electric generation plant in Southeast Missouri by Associated Electric Cooperative (Associated). The finding of no significant impact is the conclusion of an environmental assessment prepared by RUS. The environmental assessment is based on an environmental analysis submitted to RUS by Associated. RUS conducted an independent evaluation of the environmental analysis and concurs with its scope and content. The environmental analysis has been incorporated by reference in the environmental assessment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bob Quigel, Environmental Protection Specialist, Engineering and Environmental Staff, RUS, Stop 1571, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250, telephone (202) 720–0468, E-mail bquigel@rus.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The preferred site for the plant is located in Stoddard County, Missouri, approximately 1.2 miles east of Idalia on County Road E. As proposed, the project is a 100-MW, simple-cycle combustion turbine generator. It will be powered by a Westinghouse 501D5A simple cycle/dry low-nitrogen oxides combustor. Fuel for the plant will be natural gas. No backup source of fuel, such as number 2 fuel oil, is proposed. The plant will occupy approximately three acres and will be located at an existing 12 acre electric distribution substation site. The main generator unit will be approximately 40 feet wide and 140 feet long. The exhaust stack will be 50 feet high. This type of combustion turbine is typically used for peak power generation and would normally be expected to operate only a few hundred to a few thousand hours per year.

Alternatives considered to constructing the project as proposed included no action, conservation and load management, power purchases, combined cycle combustion turbine technology, and an alternative site location.

Copies of the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact along with the environmental analysis are available for review at, or can be obtained from, RUS at the address provided herein or from Jerry Bindel, Associated Electric Cooperative, PO Box 754, Springfield, Missouri, 65801–0754 telephone (417) 885–9272. Mr. Bindel's E-mail address is jbindel@aeci.org. These documents are also available at Bloomfield Public Library, 200 Seneca Street, Bloomfield, Missouri. Interested parties wishing to comment on the adequacy of the environmental assessment should do so within 30 days of the publication of this notice. RUS will take no action that would approve clearing or construction activities related to proposed combined cycle power plant prior to the expiration of the 30-day comment period.

Dated: October 27, 1998.

Thomas L. Eddy,

Acting Assistant Administrator, Electric Program.

[FR Doc. 98–29435 Filed 11–2–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–15–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Submission For OMB Review; Comment Request

DOC has submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. chapter 35).

Agency: Bureau of the Census.

Title: Quarterly Financial Reports (QFR) Program.

Form Number(s): QFR–101(MG), QFR–101A(MG), QFR–102(TR), QFR–103(NB).

Agency Approval Number: 0607–0432.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Burden: 77,616 hours.

Number of Respondents: 13,186.

Avg Hours Per Response: 2 hours and 2 minutes.

Needs and Uses: The QFR Program has published up-to-date aggregate statistics on the financial results and position of U.S. corporations since 1947. It is a principal economic indicator that also provides financial data essential to calculation of key Government measures of national economic performance. The QFR Program provides timely, accurate data on business financial conditions for use by Government and private-sector organizations and individuals. Primary users of QFR data are governmental