

Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA

§ 634.3

purpose of obtaining a payment to which a person would otherwise not be entitled.

(c) A program participant who succeeds to the responsibilities under this part shall report in writing to the NRCS any interest of any kind in enrolled land that is held by a predecessor or any lender. A failure of full disclosure will be considered a scheme or device under this section.

PART 634—RURAL CLEAN WATER PROGRAM

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AUTHORITY: Sec. 35, Pub. L. 95-217, 91 Stat. 1579 (33 U.S.C. 1288).

SOURCE: 43 FR 50855, Nov. 1, 1978, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—General

§ 634.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) The purpose of this part is for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), with the concurrence of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to set forth regulations to carry out a Rural Clean Water Program (RCWP) under section 35, Pub. L. 95-217; 91 Stat. 1579; 33 U.S.C. 1288.

(b) The Rural Clean Water Program provides financial and technical assistance to private landowners and operators (participants) having control of rural land. The assistance is provided through long-term contracts (5 to 10 years) to install best management practices (BMP's) in project areas which have critical water quality problems resulting from agricultural activities. The proposed project area must be within a high priority area in an approved agricultural portion of a 208 water quality management plan. Participation in RCWP is voluntary.

(c) The program is a new USDA program and an extension of existing water-quality management programs of EPA.

§ 634.2 Objective.

The RCWP is designed to reduce agricultural nonpoint source pollutants to improve water quality in rural areas to meet water quality standards or water quality goals. The objective is to be achieved in the most cost-effective manner possible in keeping with the provision of adequate supplies of food and fiber and a quality environment.

§ 634.3 Administration.

At the national level, the Secretary of Agriculture, with the concurrence of the Administrator, EPA, administers RCWP. The Secretary of Agriculture has delegated responsibility for administration of the program (43 FR 8252) to the Administrator, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS will be assisted by other USDA agencies in accordance with existing authorities.

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(a) A National Rural Clean Water Coordinating Committee (NRCWCC), chaired by the Administrator, NRCS, is to assist in carrying out the Rural Clean Water Program.

(b) At the State level, a State Rural Clean Water Coordinating Committee (SRCWCC) is to assist the State Conservationist, NRCS, in administering the program. The State Conservationist will chair the SRCWCC.

(c) To assure coordination at the project level, a local Rural Clean Water Coordinating Committee is to be established at the time the application is developed. An existing local committee may be used, where practicable, to perform the functions of this committee.

(d) The Administrator, NRCS, through the State Conservationists, NRCS, is to enter into agreements, where practicable, with soil conservation districts, State soil and water conservation agencies, or State water quality agencies to administer all or part of the program for a project area. That portion of program administration to be conducted by these agencies will be defined in the project application and grant agreement. Where this is not practicable, USDA will administer the program in a project area. In those instances where USDA retains administration of the program in a project area, NRCS will enter into agreements for the transfer of funds to the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) for the administration of part of the program.

§ 634.4 Responsibilities.

(a) *Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will—*

(1) Approve 208 water quality management plans,

(2) Participate in the National and State Rural Clean Water Coordinating Committees,

(3) Review and concur in project applications approved for funding in accordance with § 634.14,

(4) Advise the Secretary of Agriculture of practices which tend to defeat the purposes of contracts with rural landowners or operators in accordance with section 208(j)(1)(iv) of the act,

(5) Assist USDA in evaluating the effectiveness of the program in improving water quality, and

(6) Concur in the selection of project areas and the criteria for comprehensive, joint USDA–EPA water quality monitoring, evaluation, and analysis in accordance with § 634.50.

(b) *U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will—*

(1) With the concurrence of EPA, administer a program to enter into contracts to install and maintain best management practices to control agricultural nonpoint source pollution for improved water quality,

(2) Act through NRCS and such other USDA agencies as the Secretary may designate,

(3) Provide technical assistance and share the cost of carrying out best management practices that are set forth in the contracts,

(4) Where practicable, enter into agreements with soil conservation districts, State soil and water conservation agencies, or State water quality agencies to administer all or part of the program for a project area,

(5) Administer the program where it is not practicable for soil conservation districts, State soil and water conservation agencies, or State water quality agencies to administer all or part of the program for a project area,

(6) Together with local soil conservation districts, determine the priorities for assistance to individual participants to assure that the most critical water quality problems are addressed,

(7) Assist in evaluating the overall effectiveness of the program in improving water quality, and

(8) Within the framework of the 208 planning process, make additional investigations or plans, where necessary, to supplement information contained in the approved agricultural portion of 208 water quality management plans for the purpose of selecting among projects to be funded.

(c) *Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will—*

(1) Provide RCWP leadership,

(2) Retain major technical responsibility for RCWP, and provide leadership to assure the adequacy of standards and specifications for use by all administering agencies,