

promptly notified of the amount of the anticipated fees or such portion thereof as can readily be estimated. The notice or request for an advance deposit shall extend an offer to the requester to confer with knowledgeable Section personnel in an attempt to reformulate the request in a manner which will reduce the fees and meet the needs of the requester. Dispatch of such notice or request shall suspend the running of the period for response by the Section until a reply is received from the requester.

(c) Search costs are due and payable even if the record which was requested cannot be located after all reasonable efforts have been made, or if the Section determines that a record which has been requested, but which is exempt from disclosure under this part, is to be withheld.

(d) The Section will begin assessing interest charges on an unpaid bill starting the 31st day following the day on which the billing was sent. The accrual of interest will be stayed upon receipt of the fee, rather than upon its processing by the Section. Interest will at the rate prescribed in section 3717 of title 31 U.S.C.

(e) A requester may not file multiple requests at the same time, each seeking portions of a document or documents, solely in order to avoid payment of fees. When the Section reasonably believes that a requester or a group of requesters acting in concert is attempting to break a request down into a series of requests for the purpose of evading the assessment of fees, the Section will aggregate any such requests and charge accordingly.

(f) The Section will not require a requester to make an advance payment, i.e., payment before work is commenced or continued on a request, unless:

(1) The Section estimates or determines that allowable charges that a requester may be required to pay are likely to exceed \$250. Then the Section will notify the requester of the likely costs and obtain satisfactory assurance of full payment where the requester has a history of prompt payment of FOIA fees, or require an advance payment of an amount up to the full esti-

mated charges in the case of requesters with no history of payment; or

(2) Requesters who have previously failed to pay fees charged in a timely fashion (i.e., within 30 days of the date of the billing), the Section will require such requesters to pay the full amount owed plus any applicable interest as provided above or demonstrate that they have, in fact, paid the fee, and to make an advance payment of the full amount of the estimated fee before the agency begins to process new requests or pending requests from such requesters.

When the Section acts under paragraph (f) (1) or (2) of this section, the administrative time limit prescribed in subsection (a)(6) of the FOIA (i.e., 10 working days from receipt of initial requests plus permissible extensions of that time limit) will begin only after the Section has received payments described above.

(g) In accordance with the provisions and authorities of the Debt Collection Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97-365), the Section reserves the right to disclose information to consumer reporting agencies and to use collection agencies, where appropriate, to encourage repayment.

(h) No fees under \$10 will be billed by the Section because the cost of collection would be greater than the fee.

(i) Requester should pay fees by check or money order made out to the U.S. Section, International Boundary and Water Commission, and mailed to the Finance and Accounting Office, United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission, 4171 North Mesa, suite C-310, El Paso, TX 79902-1422.

§ 1102.5 Categories of requesters for fee purposes.

There are four categories of requesters: Commercial use requesters; educational and non-commercial scientific institutions; representatives of the news media; and all other requesters. The Act prescribes specific levels of fees for each of these categories. The Section will take into account information provided by requesters in determining their eligibility for inclusion in one of these categories as defined in § 1102.2. It is in the requester's best interest to provide as much information

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as possible to demonstrate inclusion within a non-commercial category of fee treatment.

(a) The Section will assess charges which recover the full direct costs of searching for, reviewing for release, and duplicating the records sought for commercial use. Commercial use requesters are entitled to neither two hours of free search time nor 100 free pages of reproduction of documents.

(b) The Section will provide documents to educational and non-commercial scientific institutions for the cost of reproduction alone, excluding charges for the first 100 pages. To be eligible for inclusion in this category, requesters must show that the request being made is authorized by, and under the auspices of, a qualifying institution and that the records are not sought for a commercial use, but are sought in furtherance of scholarly (if the request is from an educational institution) or scientific (if the request is from a non-commercial scientific institution) research.

(c) The Section will provide documents to representatives of the news media for the cost of reproduction alone, excluding charges for the first 100 pages. To be eligible for inclusion in this category; a requester must meet the criteria in §1102.2(m), and the request must not be made for a commercial use. In reference to this class of requesters, a request for records supporting the news dissemination function of the requester shall not be considered to be a request that is for a commercial use.

(d) The Section will charge requesters who do not fit into any of the categories above fees which recover the full reasonable direct cost of searching for and reproducing records that are responsive to the request, except that the first 100 pages of reproduction and the first two hours of search time shall be furnished without charge. Moreover, requests from record subjects for records about themselves will continue to be treated under the fee provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 which permit fees only for reproduction.

(e) In making determinations under this section, the Section may take into account whether requesters who previously were granted (b), (c), or (d) sta-

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tus under the Act did in fact use the requested records for purposes compatible with the status accorded them.

§ 1102.6 Fee waivers and appeals.

(a) Waiver or reduction of any fee provided for in §1102.4 may be made upon a determination by the FOIA Officer, United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission, 4171 North Mesa, suite C-310, El Paso, TX 79902-1422. The Section shall furnish documents without charge or at a reduced charge provided that: Disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the Government, and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester. Requests for a waiver or reduction of fees shall be considered on a case-by-case basis.

(1) In order to determine whether disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the Government, the Section will consider the following four factors:

(i) The subject of the request: Whether the subject of the requested records concerns the operations or activities of the Government;

(ii) The informative value of the information to be disclosed: Whether the disclosure is likely to contribute to an understanding of Government operations or activities;

(iii) The contribution to an understanding of the subject by the general public likely to result from disclosure: Whether disclosure of the requested information will contribute to public understanding; and

(iv) The significance of the contribution to public understanding: Whether the disclosure is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of Government operations or activities.

(2) In order to determine whether disclosure of the information is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester, the Section will consider the following two factors:

(i) The existence and magnitude of a commercial interest: Whether the requester has a commercial interest that