

§ 624.11

as determined by the Chief of NRCS and when in the best interest of the Government, land exchanges may be authorized pursuant to (7 U.S.C. 428a) and other applicable authorities.

(d) *Enforcement.* (1) In the event of a violation of an easement, the violator will be given reasonable notice and an opportunity to correct the violation within 30 days of the date of the notice, or such additional time as NRCS may allow.

(2) NRCS reserves the right to enter upon the easement area at any time to remedy deficiencies or easement violations. Such entry may be made at the discretion of NRCS when such actions are deemed necessary to protect important floodplain functions and values or other rights of the United States under the easement. The landowner will be liable for any costs incurred by the United States as a result of the landowner's negligence or failure to comply with easement or agreement obligations.

(3) In addition to any and all legal and equitable remedies as may be available to the United States under applicable law, NRCS may withhold any easement and cost-share payments owing to landowners at any time there is a material breach of the easement covenants or any associated agreements. Such withheld funds may be used to offset costs incurred by the United States, in any remedial actions, or retained as damages pursuant to court order or settlement agreement.

(4) NRCS will be entitled to recover any and all administrative and legal costs, including attorney's fees or expenses, associated with any enforcement or remedial action.

(5) On the violation of the terms or conditions of the easement or related agreement, the easement shall remain in force, and NRCS may require the landowner to refund all or part of any payments received by the landowner under this Part, together with interest thereon as determined appropriate by NRCS.

(6) All the general penal statutes relating to crimes and offenses against the United States shall apply in the administration of floodplain easements acquired under this part.

7 CFR Ch. VI (1-1-08 Edition)

§ 624.11 Waivers.

To the extent allowed by law, the NRCS Deputy Chief for Programs may waive any provision of these regulations when the agency makes a written determination that such waiver is in the best interest of the Federal government.

PART 625—HEALTHY FORESTS RESERVE PROGRAM

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AUTHORITY: 16 U.S.C. 6571-6578.

SOURCE: 71 FR 28556, May 17, 2006, unless otherwise noted.

§ 625.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) The purpose of the Health Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) is to assist landowners, on a voluntary basis, in restoring, enhancing, and protecting forestland resources on private lands through easements and 10-year cost-share agreements.

(b) The objectives of HFRP are to:

(1) Promote the recovery of endangered and threatened species under the ESA;

(2) Improve plant and animal biodiversity; and

(3) Enhance carbon sequestration.

(c) The regulations in this part set forth the policies, procedures, and requirements for the HFRP as administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for program