

for quality case studies in addition to those already being conducted by OPQA. The USPTO will use the results of the studies to improve its understanding of the quality of its work products and, where appropriate, to take action to remediate quality issues or to formulate best practices to further enhance quality. For example, if a case study reveals a training issue, the USPTO will develop and deliver the appropriate training.

This pilot program will help the USPTO determine the usefulness of this manner of public submission for case study topics as compared to currently-existing methods, such as public fora and external quality surveys. In addition, this pilot program will allow the USPTO to communicate to the public the case studies determined to be useful and the results of those studies.

IV. Example of a Topic Submission

The following example is provided to assist the public in providing high-quality submissions that best communicate a focused case study topic for consideration:

Title: “Pre-first action interviews and quality of the resulting patent prosecution.”

Proposal for study: “Pre-first action interviews result in a shorter time-to-issuance in such applications that are issued as patents.”

Explanation: In my experience as a patent practitioner, interviews with examiners lead to better understanding of the claimed invention by both parties. In particular, interviews can reveal that the parties are operating under differing understandings of the scope of the claims, the meaning of a claim term, or interpretation of a teaching of the prior art. When performed early in prosecution, these can provide the opportunity to resolve such differences before the mutual misunderstanding or miscommunication results in extended prosecution. This permits more efficient examination as reflected by a shorter prosecution time for those applications that eventually mature into patents. These efficiency gains are most noticeable after April 1, 2011, when the Full First Action Interview Pilot Program went into effect. The USPTO should study what effect an interview before the first action on the merits in a new application has on time-to-allowance in applications that are eventually issued as patents, and if there are any particular features of the interview that strongly correlate with the time-to-allowance. Discovery of such correlations could lead to USPTO process changes or changes in applicants' approach to prosecution that

could improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of patent prosecution.

Dated: December 15, 2015.

Michelle K. Lee,

Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

[FR Doc. 2015–31897 Filed 12–18–15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–16–P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 52

[EPA–R06–OAR–2015–0497; FRL–9940–17–Region 6]

Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas; Control of Air Pollution From Nitrogen Compounds State Implementation Plan

AGENCY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing approval of revisions to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) submitted by the State of Texas through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) on July 10, 2015. The Texas SIP submission revises 30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 117 rules for control of nitrogen compounds to assist the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) moderate nonattainment area (NAA) in attaining the 2008 eight-hour ozone (O₃) National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before January 20, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Submit your comments, identified by Docket No. EPA–R06–OAR–2015–0497, by one of the following methods:

- *www.regulations.gov.* Follow the online instructions.
- *Email:* Mr. Guy Donaldson at donaldson.guy@epa.gov.
- *Mail or delivery:* Mr. Guy Donaldson, Chief, Air Branch (6MM–AA), Environmental Protection Agency, 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200, Dallas, Texas 75202–2733.

Instructions: Direct comments to Docket No. EPA–R06–OAR–2015–0497. The EPA's policy is that all comments received will be included in the public docket without change and made available online at www.regulations.gov. The EPA includes any personal information provided, unless a comment includes information claimed to be Confidential Business Information (CBI) or other information whose

disclosure is restricted by statute. Do not submit any information electronically that is considered CBI or any other information whose disclosure is restricted by statute. The www.regulations.gov Web site is an “anonymous access” system, which means the EPA will not know one's identity or contact information unless it is provided in the body of a comment. If a comment is emailed directly to the EPA without going through www.regulations.gov, then the sender's email address will automatically be captured and included as part of the public docket comment and made available on the Internet. If a comment is submitted electronically, then the EPA recommends that one's name and other contact information be included in the body of the comment, and with any disk or CD-ROM submitted. If the EPA cannot read a particular comment due to technical difficulties and is unable to contact for clarification, the EPA may not be able to consider the comment. Electronic files should avoid the use of special characters, any form of encryption, and be free of any defects or viruses. Multimedia submissions (audio, video, etc.) must be accompanied by a written comment. The written comment will be considered the official comment with multimedia submissions and should include all discussion points desired. The EPA will generally not consider a comment or its contents submitted outside of the primary submission (*i.e.* on the Web, cloud, or other file sharing system). For additional information on submitting comments, please visit <http://www2.epa.gov/dockets/commenting-epa-dockets>.

Docket: The index to the docket for this action is available electronically at www.regulations.gov and in hard copy at the EPA Region 6, 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 700, Dallas, Texas. While all documents in the docket are listed in the index, some information may be publicly available only at the hard copy location (*e.g.*, copyrighted material), and some may not be publicly available at either location (*e.g.*, CBI).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. James E. Grady, (214) 665–6745; grady.james@epa.gov. To inspect the hard copy materials, please schedule an appointment with Mr. Grady or Mr. Bill Deese at (214) 665–7253.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Throughout this document “we,” “us,” or “our” means “the EPA.”

Table of Contents

- I. Background on DFW 2008 Eight-Hour O₃ NAA Designation and Classification

- II. Background on Chapter 117 Proposed Rule Revisions
 III. Evaluation of Texas' Proposed Chapter 117 NO_x Control SIP
 IV. The EPA's Proposed Action
 V. Incorporation by Reference
 VI. Statutory and Executive Order Reviews

I. Background on DFW 2008 Eight-Hour O₃ NAA Designation and Classification

On March 27, 2008, the EPA revised the primary and secondary O₃ standard to a level of 75 parts per billion (ppb). Promulgation of a NAAQS triggers a requirement for the EPA to designate areas as nonattainment, attainment, or unclassifiable, and to classify the NAAs at the time of designation.

On May 21, 2012, the EPA established initial area designations for most areas of the country with respect to the 2008 primary and secondary eight-hour O₃ NAAQS. The EPA published two rules addressing final implementation¹ and air quality designations.² The implementation rule established classifications, associated attainment deadlines, and revoked the 1997 O₃ standards for transportation conformity purposes. The designation rule finalized the NAA boundaries for areas that did not meet the 75 ppb standard. Furthermore, the finalized boundaries were classified according to the severity of their O₃ air quality problems as determined by each area's design value.³ The O₃ classification categories were defined as Marginal, Moderate, Serious, Severe, or Extreme.

Effective July 20, 2012, the DFW 2008 eight-hour O₃ NAA was classified as moderate, consisting of ten counties: Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant, and Wise County. With the exception of

Wise County, all of these counties were designated as nonattainment with a serious classification under the 1997 O₃ standard. Although the NAA was most recently classified as moderate, the first nine counties are still required to meet their more stringent serious classification requirements previously designated under the 1997 O₃ standard. Wise County, however, is required to meet the moderate classification requirements since it is newly designated as nonattainment for the DFW area.⁴ Previously, Wise County was classified as an attainment area and was exempt from the O₃ NAA requirements under the 1997 eight-hour O₃ standard.

States are required to adopt control measures that implement Reasonably Available Control Technology (RACT) on major sources of NO_x emissions.⁵ The major source emission threshold level for the first nine counties (Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, and Tarrant) remains at a potential to emit (PTE) of fifty tons per year (tpy) NO_x based on its serious classification under the 1997 standard. Wise County major source threshold is 100 tpy NO_x based on the moderate classification requirement.

II. Background on Chapter 117 Proposed Rule Revisions

On July 10, 2015 the EPA received, the TCEQ submitted rule revisions to 30 TAC, Chapter 117 "Control of Air Pollution from Nitrogen Compounds." The State revised Chapter 117 for all major sources of NO_x in the 2008 DFW O₃ NAA for the implementation of RACT requirements in all counties as required by CAA, section 172(c)(1) and section 182(f). The state previously

adopted Chapter 117 NO_x rules for sources in the DFW area as part of the SIP submitted on May 30, 2007, for the 1997 eight-hour O₃ standard. The EPA approved those rules on December 8, 2008.⁶ The scope of the Chapter 117 rule revisions implement the following:⁷

- Add NO_x emission limits and control requirements to major sources in newly designated Wise County.
- Revoke an exemption for utility turbines and auxiliary steam boilers installed after November 15, 1992 in the DFW area;
- Provide compliance flexibility to affected units in all areas covered by Chapter 117 for owners or operators of boilers and process heaters used on a temporary basis (<60 calendar days);
- Repeal certain major source industrial rules and utility rules for the DFW area that are now obsolete due to the passing of compliance dates;
- Add compliance schedules for the new or revised RACT rules and add compliance dates for sources that become subject to these rules after the initial compliance date;
- Add definitions to reflect the change in attainment status of Wise County;
- Implement work practice standards or operating requirements
- Update associated monitoring, recordkeeping, and reporting requirements
- Establish exemptions

Table 2 contains a list of the sections of Chapter 117 with adopted subchapters, divisions, and key sections with modifications associated with the July 10, 2015 DFW 2008 eight-hour O₃ SIP submittal.

TABLE 2—DESCRIPTION AND SECTIONS OF 30 TAC, CHAPTER 117 PROPOSED FOR MODIFICATION

Description	Section
Subchapter A: Definitions	117.10.
Subchapter B, Division 4, DFW Eight-Hour O ₃ NAA Major Sources	117.400, 117.403, 117.410, 117.423, 117.425, 117.430, 117.435, 117.440, 117.445, 117.450, 117.454, and 117.456.
Subchapter C, Division 4, DFW Eight-Hour O ₃ NAA Utility Electric Generation Sources.	117.1303, 117.1310, 117.1325, 117.1335, 117.1340, 117.1345, 117.1350, and 117.1354.
Subchapter G, Division 1, General Monitoring and Testing Requirements.	117.8000
Subchapter H, Division 1, Compliance Schedules and Division 2, Compliance Flexibility.	117.9030 and 117.9130, 117.9800 and 117.9810.

¹ See 77 FR 30160 "Implementation of the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone: Nonattainment Area Classifications Approach, Attainment Deadlines and Revocation of the 1997 Ozone Standards for Transportation Conformity Purposes."

² See 77 FR 30088, "Air Quality Designations for the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards."

³ The air quality design value for the 8-hour ozone NAAQS is the three-year average of the annual fourth highest daily maximum eight-hour

average ozone concentration. See 40 CFR part 50, appendix I.

⁴ In pursuant to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruling in favor of the EPA's inclusion of Wise County in the DFW 2008 eight-hour ozone nonattainment area as lawful (see USCA Case #12-1309).

⁵ The EPA is not making a determination that the TCEQ rules included in these revisions will meet the RACT requirements of the CAA section 182(b) for the 2008 O₃ NAAQS. The EPA will make that review in a separate action. The EPA is only finding

that these rule changes will strengthen the SIP by achieving NO_x reductions in the DFW NAA.

⁶ See 73 FR 73562.

⁷ This is not an exhaustive list of changes to the 30 TAC Chapter 117 rules. For a complete summary of all Chapter 117 sections associated with this SIP revision, please refer to the Technical Support Document (TSD), "30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 117 Control of Air Pollution from Nitrogen Compounds," a copy of which is posted in the docket of this proposal.

Table 3 contains a list of the sections of Chapter 117 with adopted subchapters, divisions, and key sections with new requirements associated with the July 10, 2015 DFW 2008 eight-hour O₃ SIP submittal.

TABLE 3—DESCRIPTION AND SECTIONS OF 30 TAC, CHAPTER 117 PROPOSED NEW

Description	Section
Subchapter B, Division 4, DFW Eight-Hour O ₃ NAA Major Sources	117.405, 117.452.

Per TCEQ's request, the following sections listed in Table 4 below will not become a part of the EPA-approved Texas SIP. These rules pertain mainly to the control of carbon monoxide and ammonia emissions, which are not O₃ precursors and, therefore, not necessary components of the DFW SIP. The EPA concurs that these rules can remain outside of the SIP.

TABLE 4—DESCRIPTION AND SECTIONS OF 30 TAC, CHAPTER 117 NOT IN TEXAS SIP

Description	Sections
Previously excluded and the TCEQ continues to ask that these remain outside the SIP. Adopted new and will not be submitted as a SIP revision	117.210(c), 117.225, 117.410(d), 117.425, 117.1110(b), 117.1125, 117.1310(b), and 117.1325. 117.405(d).

Table 5 contains subchapters, divisions, and key sections proposed for repeal from the SIP by the TCEQ. The TCEQ adopts the repeal of existing Subchapters B and C in Division 2 as well as sections 117.9010 and 117.9110 of Subchapter H in Division 1 because compliance dates for sources of NO_x subject to these have passed and are now considered obsolete. Furthermore, sources previously subject are now required to comply with more stringent rules in existing Subchapter B and C, Division 4 and in revised sections 117.9030, 117.9130.

TABLE 5—DESCRIPTION AND SECTIONS OF 30 TAC, CHAPTER 117 PROPOSED FOR REPEAL

Description	Section
Subchapter B, Division 2, DFW O ₃ NAA Major Sources	117.200, 117.203, 117.205, 117.210, 117.215, 117.223, 117.225, 117.230, 117.235, 117.240, 117.245, 117.252, 117.254, 117.256.
Subchapter C, Division 2, DFW O ₃ NAA Utility Electric Generation Sources.	117.1100, 117.1103, 117.1105, 117.1110, 117.1115, 117.1120, 117.1125, 117.1135, 117.1140, 117.1145, 117.1152, 117.1154, 117.1156.
Subchapter H, Division 1, Compliance Schedules	117.9010, 117.9110.

A complete summary along with all non-substantive changes pertaining to reformatting, restructuring, reorganizing, and administrative revisions will be referenced in the Technical Support Document (TSD), "30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 117 Control of Air Pollution from Nitrogen Compounds," a copy of which is posted in the docket of this proposal.

III. Evaluation of Texas' Proposed Chapter 117 NO_x Control SIP

Please refer to Table 6 for a list of NO_x emissions specifications for major sources in newly designated Wise County. The new NO_x emission limits will assure that each source listed will not exceed the 75 ppb O₃ NAAQS standard.

TABLE 6—NO_x EMISSION LIMITS FOR 2008 DFW 8-HOUR O₃ NAA FOR MAJOR SOURCES IN WISE COUNTY

Source	Type	Capacity	NO _x Limit	Citation
Process Heaters	Max Rated Capacity ≥40 MMBtu/hr	0.10 lb/MMBtu;	117.405(b)(1).
		An option	or 82 ppm _v NO _x at 3% O ₂ dry basis.	117.405(b)(1).
Stationary, Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engines.	Gas-Fired Rich-Burn Gas-Fired Lean-Burn White Superior four-cycle units that have been placed into service, modified, reconstructed, or relocated before June 1, 2015. White Superior four-cycle units that have been placed into service, modified, reconstructed, or relocated on or after June 1, 2015. Clark two-cycle units that have been placed into service, modified, reconstructed, or relocated before June 1, 2015.	0.50 g/hp-hr	117.405(b)(2)(A).
			12.0 g/hp-hr	117.405(b)(2)(B)(i)(I).
			2.0 g/hp-hr	117.405(b)(2)(B)(i)(II).
			12.0 g/hp-hr	117.405(b)(2)(B)(ii)(I).

TABLE 6—NO_x EMISSION LIMITS FOR 2008 DFW 8-HOUR O₃ NAA FOR MAJOR SOURCES IN WISE COUNTY—Continued

Source	Type	Capacity	NO _x Limit	Citation
Turbines	Stationary Gas	Clark two-cycle units that have been placed into service, modified, reconstructed, or relocated on or after June 1, 2015.	2.0 g/hp-hr	117.405(b)(2)(B)(ii)(II).
		Fairbanks Morse MEP two-cycle units that have been placed into service, modified, reconstructed, or relocated before June 1, 2015.	4.0 g/hp-hr	117.405(b)(2)(B)(iii)(I).
		Fairbanks Morse MEP two-cycle units that have been placed into service, modified, reconstructed, or relocated on or after June 1, 2015.	2.0 g/hp-hr	117.405(b)(2)(B)(iii)(II).
		All others	2.0 g/hp-hr	117.405(b)(2)(B)(iv).
		hp rating ≤10,000 hp	0.55 lb/MMBtu	117.405(b)(3)(A).
		hp rating ≥10,000 hp	0.15 lb/MMBtu	117.405(b)(3)(B).

Various controls for each major source in Wise County are needed to achieve the required NO_x limits. Process heaters are expected to achieve compliance after installing dry low-NO_x combustors with the proposed 0.10 lb/MMBtu emission specification. Gas-fired, rich-burn, combustion engines are anticipated to reach compliance using nonselective catalytic reduction (NSCR) as primary control technology with air-to-fuel ratio regulators. The addition of a secondary catalyst module may be required to meet the proposed emission specification of 0.50 g/hp-hr, for gas-fired, lean-burn, combustion engines. All other lean-burn engines are estimated to reach compliance after combustion modifications with the proposed 2.0 g/hp-hr emission specification. New gas-fired, lean-burn engines can meet the proposed 2.0 g/hp-hr standard without modification or installation of additional controls.

It is estimated that the adopted rules will reduce the amount of NO_x in the DFW area by 1.17 tons per day (tpd). The resulting emission reductions will assist Texas in demonstrating attainment of the eight-hour O₃ standard within the DFW NAA. As a result, the EPA is proposing to approve the NO_x emission requirements for affected major sources in the DFW NAA.

IV. The EPAs Proposed Action

The EPA is proposing to approve the submitted TAC Chapter 117 SIP revisions into the SIP because they will assist the DFW area into attainment under the 2008 8-Hour O₃ NAAQS by keeping each emissions source below 75 ppb. The EPA is proposing to approve all amended, repealed, and new sections of Chapter 117 that are being submitted as part of this SIP revision. The EPA is not making a determination that the TCEQ rules included in these revisions will meet the RACT requirements of the CAA § 182(b) for the 2008 O₃ NAAQS.

The EPA will make that review in a separate action. The EPA is only finding that these rule changes will strengthen the SIP by achieving NO_x reductions in the DFW NAA.

V. Incorporation by Reference

In this action, the EPA is proposing to include in a final rule regulatory text that includes incorporation by reference. In accordance with the requirements of 1 CFR 51.5, the EPA is proposing to incorporate by reference revisions to the Texas regulations as described in the Proposed Action section above. The EPA has made, and will continue to make, these documents generally available electronically through www.regulations.gov and/or in hard copy at the EPA Region 6 office.

VI. Statutory and Executive Order Reviews

Under the CAA, the Administrator is required to approve a SIP submission that complies with the provisions of the Act and applicable Federal regulations. 42 U.S.C. 7410(k); 40 CFR 52.02(a). Thus, in reviewing SIP submissions, the EPA's role is to approve state choices, provided that states meet the criteria of the CAA. Accordingly, this action merely proposes to approve state law as meeting Federal requirements and does not impose additional requirements beyond those imposed by state law. For that reason, this action:

- Is not a "significant regulatory action" subject to review by the Office of Management and Budget under Executive Orders 12866 (58 FR 51735, October 4, 1993) and 13563 (76 FR 3821, January 21, 2011);
- Does not impose an information collection burden under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*);
- Is certified as not having a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities

under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*);

- Does not contain any unfunded mandate or significantly or uniquely affect small governments, as described in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-4);
- Does not have Federalism implications as specified in Executive Order 13132 (64 FR 43255, August 10, 1999);
- Is not an economically significant regulatory action based on health or safety risks subject to Executive Order 13045 (62 FR 19885, April 23, 1997);
- Is not a significant regulatory action subject to Executive Order 13211 (66 FR 28355, May 22, 2001);
- Is not subject to requirements of section 12(d) of the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995 (15 U.S.C. 272 note) because application of those requirements would be inconsistent with the CAA; and
- Does not provide EPA with the discretionary authority to address, as appropriate, disproportionate human health or environmental effects, using practicable and legally permissible methods, under Executive Order 12898 (59 FR 7629, February 16, 1994).

In addition, the SIP is not approved to apply on any Indian reservation land or in any other area where EPA or an Indian tribe has demonstrated that a tribe has jurisdiction. In those areas of Indian country, the proposed rule does not have tribal implications and will not impose substantial direct costs on tribal governments or preempt tribal law as specified by Executive Order 13175 (65 FR 67249, November 9, 2000).

List of Subjects in 40 CFR Part 52

Environmental protection, Air pollution control, Hydrocarbons, Incorporation by reference, Intergovernmental relations, Nitrogen oxides, Ozone, Reasonably available control technology, Reporting and

recordkeeping requirements, Volatile organic compounds.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*

Dated: December 8, 2015.

Ron Curry,

Regional Administrator, Region 6.

[FR Doc. 2015–31662 Filed 12–18–15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560–50–P

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

45 CFR Part 1330

RIN 0985–AA12

National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research

AGENCY: National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research; Administration for Community Living; HHS.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: This proposed rule would implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and reflect the transfer of the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) from the Department of Education to the Department of Health and Human Services. The previous regulations were issued by the Department of Education. The rulemaking will consolidate the NIDILRR regulations into a single part, align the regulations with the current statute and HHS policies, and will provide guidance to NIDILRR grantees.

DATES: Comments are due on or before February 19, 2016.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments in one of following ways (no duplicates, please): Written comments may be submitted through any of the methods specified below. Please do not submit duplicate comments.

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: You may (and we encourage you to) submit electronic comments on this regulation at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions under the “submit a comment” tab. Attachments should be in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or Excel; however, we prefer Microsoft Word.

- Regular, Express, or Overnight Mail: You may mail written comments to the following address only: Administration for Community Living, Attention: NIDILRR NPRM, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC 20201. Please allow sufficient time for mailed comments to be received before the close of the comment period.

- Individuals with a Disability: We will provide an appropriate accommodation, including alternative formats, upon request. To make such a request, please contact Marlina Moses-Gaither, (202) 795–7409 (Voice) or at marlina.moses-gaither@acl.hhs.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Greg Pugh, Administration for Community Living, telephone (202) 795–7422 (Voice). This is not a toll-free number. This document will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (“WIOA,” Pub. L. 113–128), signed into law on July 22, 2014, included significant changes to Title II of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The first of these is the insertion of a new name, the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (“NIDILRR,” which was previously the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research). WIOA also relocates NIDILRR from the Department of Education (“ED”) to the Administration for Community Living (“ACL”) of the Department of Health and Human Services.

II. Programs Authorized by Title II of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended by WIOA

A. Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers

The purpose of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers program is to plan and conduct research, development, demonstrations, training, dissemination, and related activities, including international activities, to maximize the full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, family support, and economic and social self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities, especially individuals with the most severe disabilities, and improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 701 *et seq.*

To this end, NIDILRR provides grants to establish and support:

- Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research Projects;
- Field Initiated Projects;
- Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training Projects;
- Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers; and
- Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers.

Eligible entities for awards under this program include States, public or private agencies and organizations, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

B. Research Fellowships

The purpose of the Research Fellowships program is to build research capacity by providing support to highly qualified individuals, including those who are individuals with disabilities, to perform research on rehabilitation and independent living of individuals with disabilities. Any individual is eligible for assistance under this program who has training and experience that indicate a potential for engaging in scientific research related to the solution of rehabilitation problems of individuals with disabilities. The program provides grants to support two categories of Fellowships: Distinguished Fellowships (for those with seven or more years of relevant research experience) and Merit Fellowships (for individuals in earlier stages of their careers in research).

C. Special Projects and Demonstrations for Spinal Cord Injuries

The Special Projects and Demonstrations for Spinal Cord Injuries program provides assistance to establish innovative projects for the delivery, demonstration, and evaluation of comprehensive medical, vocational, and other rehabilitation services to meet the wide range of needs, including independent living, of individuals with spinal cord injuries. The entities eligible for an award under these Projects and Demonstrations are the same as for Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers.

III. Discussion of Proposed Rule

Department of Education regulations governing the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research are found at 34 CFR parts 350, 356, and 359. Part 350 sets forth regulations addressing the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program; part 356 sets forth regulations addressing Disability and Rehabilitation Research Fellowships; and part 359 sets forth regulations addressing Special Projects and Demonstrations for Spinal Cord Injuries. ACL proposes to streamline the NIDILRR regulations and to consolidate them into one part, 45 CFR part 1330. In our regulations, we propose to eliminate regulatory language included in the corresponding ED regulations that does not add further interpretation to the statutory language. We also propose to eliminate unnecessary regulatory