

§ 200.80f [Removed]**■ 8. Remove § 200.80f.**

By the Commission.

Dated: December 21, 2017.

Brent J. Fields,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 2017–27967 Filed 1–2–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8011–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service****36 CFR Part 220**

[Docket No.

RIN 0596–AD31

National Environmental Policy Act Compliance

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Advance notice of proposed rulemaking; request for comment.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service is proposing to revise its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures with the goal of increasing efficiency of environmental analysis. This will help the Forest Service implement its core mission by increasing the health and productivity of our Nation's forests for the benefit of all Americans, and in turn foster productive and sustainable use of National Forest System lands. The Agency's NEPA procedures are a key component of its overall environmental analysis and decision-making process. The Agency is seeking comments from the public on ways it can achieve the goals of increased efficiency of environmental analysis.

DATES: Comments must be received in writing by February 2, 2018.

ADDRESSES: Please submit comments via one of the following methods:

1. *Public participation portal (preferred):* <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?project=ORMS-1797>.

2. *Mail:* NEPA Services Group, c/o Amy Barker; USDA Forest Service, Geospatial Technology and Applications Center, 2222 West 2300 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84119.

3. *Email:* nepa-procedures-revision@fs.fed.us.

All comments, including names and addresses when provided, are placed in the record and are available for public inspection and copying. The public may inspect comments received online via the public reading room at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/ReadingRoom?project=ORMS-1797>, or

at U.S. Forest Service, Ecosystem Management Coordination, 201 14th St. SW, 2 Central, Washington, DC 20024. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to (202) 205–1475 to facilitate entry to the building.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Smalls; Assistant Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination; 202–205–1475. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1–800–877–8339 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

The Forest Service is proposing to revise its NEPA procedures (including its regulations at 36 CFR part 220, Forest Service Manual 1950, and Forest Service Handbook 1909.15) with the goal of increasing efficiency of environmental analysis. The Agency will continue to hold true to its commitment to deliver scientifically based, high-quality analysis to decision makers that honors its environmental stewardship responsibilities while maintaining robust public participation. These values are at the core of the Forest Service mission.

Reforming the Forest Service's NEPA procedures is needed for a variety of reasons. An increasing percentage of the Agency's resources are spent each year to provide the necessary resources for wildfire suppression, resulting in fewer resources available for other management activities such as restoration. In 1995, fire made up 16 percent of the Forest Service's annual appropriated budget. In 2017, more than 50 percent of the Forest Service's annual budget will be dedicated to wildfire. Along with this shift in resources, there has also been a corresponding shift in staff, with a 39 percent reduction in all non-fire personnel since 1995. Additionally, the Agency has a backlog of more than 6,000 special use permits awaiting completion, and over 80 million acres of National Forest System land are in need of restoration to reduce the risk of wildfire, insect epidemics, and forest diseases.

Increasing efficiency of environmental analysis will enable the Agency to complete more projects needed to increase the health and productivity of our national forests and grasslands. The Agency's goal is to complete project decision making in a timelier manner, to improve or eliminate inefficient processes and steps, and where appropriate increase the scale of

analysis and the amount of activities authorized in a single analysis and decision. Improving the efficiency of environmental analysis and decision making will enable the agency to ensure lands and watersheds are sustainable, healthy, and productive; mitigate wildfire risk; and contribute to the economic health of rural communities through use and access opportunities.

Agency NEPA Procedures

Each Federal agency is required to develop NEPA procedures that supplement the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations and reflect the agency's unique mandate and mission. The CEQ encourages agencies to periodically review their NEPA procedures. The Forest Service's NEPA procedures were last reviewed in 2008 when the Agency moved a subset of its NEPA procedures from the Forest Service Manual and Handbook to the Code of Federal Regulations. However, the Agency's NEPA procedures still reflect in part the policies and practices established by the Agency's 1992 NEPA Manual and Handbook. The proposed revision of the Forest Service's NEPA procedures will be developed in consultation with CEQ.

Request for Comment

The Agency is seeking public comment on the following:

- Processes and analysis requirements that can be modified, reduced, or eliminated in order to reduce time and cost while maintaining science-based, high-quality analysis; public involvement; and honoring agency stewardship responsibilities.

- Approaches to landscape-scale analysis and decision making under NEPA that facilitate restoration of National Forest System lands.

- Classes of actions that are unlikely, either individually or cumulatively, to have significant impacts and therefore should be categorically excluded from NEPA's environmental assessment and environmental impact statement requirements, such as integrated restoration projects; special use authorizations; and activities to maintain and manage Agency sites (including recreation sites), facilities, and associated infrastructure.

- Ways the Agency might expand and enhance coordination of environmental review and authorization decisions with other Federal agencies, as well as State, Tribal, or local environmental reviews.

Dated: December 20, 2017.

Tony Tooke,

Chief, USDA, Forest Service.

[FR Doc. 2017-28298 Filed 1-2-18; 8:45 am]

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

47 CFR Part 54

[WC Docket No. 17-310; FCC 17-164]

Promoting Telehealth in Rural America

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: In this document, the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) proposes measured steps as part of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Order to ensure that rural healthcare providers get the support they need while guarding against waste, fraud, and abuse, considers a series of measures to ensure the Rural Health Care (RHC) Program operates efficiently and considers the appropriate size of the funding cap. The Commission takes targeted, immediate action in the Order section of the item to mitigate the impact of the existing RHC Program cap on rural healthcare providers in funding year (FY) 2017. Because the Order section does not establish any final rules, we do not incorporate the Order section in this document.

DATES: Comments are due February 2, 2018, and reply comments are due on or before February 20, 2018. If you anticipate that you will be submitting comments, but find it difficult to do so within the period of time allowed by this document, you should advise the contact listed below as soon as possible.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by WC Docket No. 17-310, by any of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- *Federal Communications Commission's website:* <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- *People with Disabilities:* Contact the FCC to request reasonable accommodations (accessible format documents, sign language interpreters, CART, etc.) by email: FCC504@fcc.gov or phone: (202) 418-0530 or TTY: (202) 418-0432.

For detailed instructions for submitting comments and additional information on the rulemaking process,

see the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this document.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Radhika Karmarkar, Wireline Competition Bureau, (202) 418-7400 or TTY: (202) 418-0484.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This is a summary of the Commission's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in WC Docket No. 17-310; FCC 17-164, adopted on December 14, 2017 and released on December 18, 2017. The full text of this document is available for public inspection during regular business hours in the FCC Reference Center, Room CY-A257, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554 or at the following internet address: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-17-164A1.pdf.

I. Introduction

1. In this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), the Commission proposes measured steps to ensure that rural healthcare providers get the support they need while guarding against waste, fraud, and abuse. The Commission considers a series of measures to ensure the Rural Health Care (RHC) Program operates efficiently and in the appropriate size of the funding cap.

2. As technology and telemedicine assume an increasingly critical role in healthcare delivery, a well-designed RHC Program is more vital than ever. Trends suggest that rural communities across the country are falling behind when it comes to the availability of high-quality healthcare. Indeed, the American Hospital Association (AHA) reports that "obtaining access to care in rural America is a significant challenge." Over the last seven years, over 80 rural hospitals have closed and hundreds more are at risk of closing. On a per capita basis, there are far fewer doctors in rural areas than in urban areas. In sum, "rural hospitals are facing one of the great slow-moving crises in American health care."

3. By improving rural healthcare provider access to modern communications services, the RHC Program can help in overcoming some of the obstacles to healthcare delivery faced in isolated communities. Through broadband-enabled technology, a rural clinic can transmit an x-ray in a matter of seconds to a radiologist located thousands of miles away. Via video-conferencing, a woman with a high-risk pregnancy has access to the type of prenatal care that enables her baby to be delivered much closer to term. This in turn leads to fewer days in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for the baby and

potentially places the child and family on a more positive future trajectory. With a high-speed data connection, a surgeon can perform an emergency procedure remotely. In places where the nearest pharmacist is a plane ride away, vending machine-like devices can dispense prescription medications.

4. The efforts by the Commission's Connect2HealthFCC (Connect2Health) Task Force have illustrated the significant impact communications services can have on addressing the healthcare needs of persons living in rural and underserved areas, and how communities are leveraging broadband-enabled health technologies to improve access to health and care throughout the country. For example, in Mississippi, the Connect2Health Task Force highlighted the positive impact of public-private partnerships on health outcomes and how broadband-enabled health technologies have made a difference to diabetes patients in Mississippi. Additionally, in Texas, the Connect2Health Task Force emphasized how broadband-enabled health technologies can improve access to mental health care.

5. It is therefore crucial that the benefits of the RHC Program are fully realized across the nation. But current RHC Program rules and procedures may be holding back the promise of the RHC Program for the rural healthcare providers that need it most. For the second funding year (FY) in a row, demand for RHC Program support is anticipated to exceed available program funding, leaving healthcare providers to potentially pay more for service than expected. Unfortunately, part of that growth is due to an increase in waste, fraud, and abuse in the RHC Program. Further, the Telecommunications (Telecom) Program, a component of the RHC Program, has not been significantly reviewed or revised since its inception in 1997.

II. Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

A. Addressing RHC Program Funding Levels

1. Revisiting the RHC Program Funding Cap

6. The current cap on the RHC Program has remained at \$400 million since its inception in 1997. RHC Program demand, however, exceeded the cap in FY 2016 and is expected to exceed the cap in FY 2017 and in future years. The proration that comes with capped funding may be especially hard on small, rural healthcare providers with limited budgets, and so the Commission examines whether a cap of \$400 million is an appropriate level of