

Appendix 1
7 CFR PART 3550 - DIRECT SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING LOANS AND GRANTS

Subpart A - General

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7 CFR PART 3550 - DIRECT SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING LOANS AND GRANTS

Subpart A - General

§ 3550.1 Applicability.

This part sets forth policies for the direct single family housing loan programs operated by the Rural Housing Service (RHS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It addresses the requirements of sections 502 and 504 of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, and includes policies regarding both loan and grant origination and servicing. Procedures for implementing these regulations can be found in program handbooks, available in any Rural Development office. Any provision on the expenditure of funds under this part is contingent upon the availability of funds.

§ 3550.2 Purpose.

The purpose of the direct RHS single family housing loan programs is to provide low- and very low-income people who will live in rural areas with an opportunity to own adequate but modest, decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings and related facilities. The section 502 program offers persons who do not currently own adequate housing, and who cannot obtain other credit, the opportunity to acquire, build, rehabilitate, improve, or relocate dwellings in rural areas. The section 504 program offers loans to very low-income homeowners who cannot obtain other credit to repair or rehabilitate their properties. The section 504 program also offers grants to homeowners age 62 or older who cannot obtain a loan to correct health and safety hazards or to make the unit accessible to household members with disabilities.

§ 3550.3 Civil rights.

RHS will administer its programs fairly, and in accordance with both the letter and the spirit of all equal opportunity and fair housing legislation and applicable executive orders. Loans, grants, services, and benefits provided under this part shall not be denied to any person based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, marital status, familial status, age, physical or mental disability, receipt of income from public assistance, or because the applicant has, in good faith, exercised any right under the Consumer Credit Protection Act (15 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.). All activities under this part shall be accomplished in accordance with the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601-3620), Executive Order 11246, and Executive Order 11063, as amended by Executive Order 12259, as applicable. The civil rights compliance requirements for RHS are in 7 CFR part 1901, subpart E. The nondiscrimination requirements also originate from the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), 15 USC 1601 as amended and its Regulation B, 12 CFR 202, as amended.

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§ 3550.4 Reviews and appeals.

Whenever RHS makes a decision that is adverse to a participant, RHS will provide the participant with written notice of such adverse decision and the participant's rights to a USDA National Appeals Division hearing in accordance with 7 CFR part 11. Any adverse decision, whether appealable or non-appealable may be reviewed by the next-level RHS supervisor.

§ 3550.5 Environmental requirements.

(a) Policy. RHS will consider environmental quality as equal with economic, social, and other relevant factors in program development and decision-making processes. RHS will take into account potential environmental impacts of proposed projects by working with RHS applicants, other federal agencies, Indian tribes, State and local governments, and interested citizens and organizations in order to formulate actions that advance the program's goals in a manner that will protect, enhance, and restore environmental quality.

(b) Regulatory references. Processing and servicing actions under this part will be done in accordance with the requirements provided in 7 CFR part 1940, subpart G which addresses environmental requirements and 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A, which addresses lead-based paint.

§ 3550.6 State law or state supplement.

State and local laws and regulations, and the laws of federally recognized Indian tribes, may affect RHS implementation of certain provisions of this regulation, for example, with respect to the treatment of liens, construction, or environmental policies. Supplemental guidance may be issued in the case of any conflict or significant differences.

§ 3550.7 Demonstration programs.

From time to time, RHS may authorize limited demonstration programs. The purpose of these demonstration programs is to test new approaches to offering housing under the statutory authority granted to the Secretary. Therefore, such demonstration programs may not be consistent with some of the provisions contained in this part. However, any program requirements that are statutory will remain in effect. Demonstration programs will be clearly identified as such.

§ 3550.8 Exception authority.

An RHS official may request, and the Administrator or designee may make, an exception to any requirement or provision of this part or address any omission of this part that is consistent with the applicable statute if the Administrator determines that application of the requirement or provision, or failure to take action in the case of an omission, would adversely affect the Government's interest.

§ 3550.9 Conflict of interest.

(a) Objective. It is the objective of RHS to maintain the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and impartiality by employees. To reduce the potential for employee conflict of interest, all processing, approval, servicing, or review activity will be conducted in accordance with 7 CFR part 1900, subpart D by RHS employees who:

- (1) Are not themselves the applicant or borrower;
- (2) Are not members of the family or close known relatives of the applicant or borrower;
- (3) Do not have an immediate working relationship with the applicant or borrower, the employee related to the applicant or borrower, or the employee who would normally conduct the activity; or
- (4) Do not have a business or close personal association with the applicant or borrower.

(b) Applicant or borrower responsibility. The applicant or borrower must disclose any known relationship or association with an RHS employee when such information is requested.

(c) RHS employee responsibility. An RHS employee must disclose any known relationship or association with a recipient, regardless of whether the relationship or association is known to others. RHS employees or members of their families may not purchase a Real Estate Owned (REO) property, security property from a borrower, or security property at a foreclosure sale. Loan closing agents who have been involved with a particular property, as well as members of their families, are also precluded from purchasing such properties.

§ 3550.10 Definitions.

Acceleration. Demand for immediate repayment of the entire balance of a debt if the security instruments are breached.

Adjusted income. Used to determine whether an applicant is income-eligible. Adjusted income provides for deductions to account for varying household circumstances and expenses. See § 3550.54 for a complete description of adjusted income.

Adjustment. An agreement to release a debtor from liability generally upon receipt of an initial lump sum representing the maximum amount the debtor can afford to pay and periodic additional payments over a period of up to 5 years.

Amortized payment. Equal monthly payments under a fully amortized mortgage loan that provides for the scheduled payment of interest and principal over the term of the loan.

Applicant. An adult member of the household who will be responsible for repayment of the loan.

Assumption. The procedure whereby the transferee becomes liable for all or part of the debt of the transferor.

Borrower. A recipient who is indebted under the section 502 or 504 programs.

Cancellation. A decision to cease collection activities and release the debtor from personal liability for any remaining amounts owed.

Compromise. An agreement to release a debtor from liability upon receipt of a specified lump sum that is less than the total amount due.

Conditional commitment. A determination that a proposed dwelling will qualify as a program-eligible property. The conditional commitment does not reserve funds, nor does it ensure that a program-eligible applicant will be available to buy the dwelling.

Cosigner. An individual or an entity that joins in the execution of a promissory note to compensate for any deficiency in the applicant's repayment ability. The cosigner becomes jointly liable to comply with the terms of the promissory note in the event of the borrower's default, but is not entitled to any interest in the security or borrower rights.

Cross-collateralized loan. A situation in which a single property secures both RHS and Farm Service Agency loans.

Custodial property. Borrower-owned real property that serves as security for a loan that has been taken into possession by the Agency to protect the Government's interest.

Daily simple interest. A method of establishing borrower payments based on daily interest charged on the outstanding principal balance of the loan. Principal is reduced by the amount of payment in excess of the accrued interest.

Dealer-contractor. A person, firm, partnership, or corporation in the business of selling and servicing manufactured homes and developing sites for manufactured homes. A person, firm, partnership, or corporation not capable of providing the complete service is not eligible to be a dealer-contractor.

Debt instrument. A collective term encompassing obligating documents for a loan, including any applicable promissory note, assumption agreement, or grant agreement.

Deferred mortgage payments. A subsidy available to eligible, very low-income borrowers of up to 25 percent of their principal and interest payments at 1 percent for up to 15 years. The deferred amounts are subject to recapture on sale or nonoccupancy.

Deficient housing. A dwelling that lacks complete plumbing; lacks adequate heating; is dilapidated or structurally unsound; has an overcrowding situation that will be corrected with loan funds; or that is otherwise uninhabitable, unsafe, or poses a health or environmental threat to the occupant or others.

Elderly family. An elderly family consists of one of the following:

- (1) A person who is the head, spouse, or sole member of a family and who is 62 years of age or older, or who is disabled, and is an applicant or borrower;
- (2) Two or more persons who are living together, at least 1 of whom is age 62 or older, or disabled, and who is an applicant or borrower; or
- (3) In the case of a family where the deceased borrower or spouse was at least 62 years old or disabled, the surviving household member shall continue to be classified as an elderly family for the purpose of determining adjusted income, even though the surviving members may not meet the definition of elderly family on their own, *provided*:
 - (i) They occupied the dwelling with the deceased family member at the time of the death;
 - (ii) If one of the surviving family members is the spouse of the deceased family member, the family shall be classified as an elderly family only until the remarriage of the surviving spouse; and
 - (iii) At the time of the death of the deceased family member, the dwelling was financed under title V of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended.

Escrow account. An account to which the borrower contributes monthly payments to cover the anticipated costs of real estate taxes, hazard and flood insurance premiums, and other related costs.

Existing dwelling or unit. A dwelling that has either been previously owner-occupied or has been completed for more than 1 year as evidenced by an occupancy permit, certificate of occupancy or similar document issued by the local authority.

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§ 3550.10 (Con.)

False information. Information that the recipient knew was incorrect or should have known was incorrect that was provided or omitted for the purposes of obtaining assistance for which the recipient was not eligible.

Full-time student. A person who carries at least the minimum number of credit hours considered to be full-time by college or vocational school in which the person is enrolled.

Hazard. A condition of the property that jeopardizes the health or safety of the occupants or members of the community, that does not make it unfit for habitation. (See also the definition of major hazard in this section.)

Household. All persons expected to be living in the dwelling, except for live-in aids, foster children, and foster adults.

Housing Act of 1949, as amended. The Act which provides the authority for the direct single family housing programs. It is codified at 42 U.S.C. 1471, et seq.

HUD. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Inaccurate information. Incorrect information inadvertently provided, used, or omitted without the intent to obtain benefits for which the recipient was not eligible.

Indian reservation. All land located within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States notwithstanding the issuance of any patent and including rights-of-way running through the reservation; trust or restricted land located within the boundaries of a former reservation of a federally recognized Indian tribe in the State of Oklahoma; or all Indian allotments, the titles to which have not been extinguished, if such allotments are subject to the jurisdiction of a federally recognized Indian tribe.

Interest credit. A payment subsidy available to certain eligible section 502 borrowers that reduces the effective interest rate of a loan (see § 3550.68(d)). Borrowers receiving interest credit will continue to receive it on all current and future loans for as long as they remain eligible for and continue to receive a subsidy. Borrowers who cease to be eligible for interest credit can never receive interest credit again, but may receive payment assistance if they again qualify for a payment subsidy.

Junior lien. A security instrument or a judgment against the security property to which the RHS debt instrument is superior.

Legal alien. For the purposes of this part, legal alien refers to any person lawfully admitted to the country who meets the criteria in section 214 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1980, 42 U.S.C. 1436a.

§ 3550.10 (Con.)

Leveraged loan. An affordable housing product loan or grant to an Agency borrower property, closed simultaneously with an RHS loan. Affordable leveraged loans are characterized by long term (not less than 30 years), amortized payments with a note interest rate equal to or less than 3 percent.

Live-in aide. A person who lives with an elderly or disabled person and is essential to that person's care and well-being, not obligated for the person's support, and would not be living in the unit except to provide the support services.

Low income. An adjusted income that is greater than the HUD established very low-income limit, but that does not exceed the HUD established low-income limit (generally 80 percent of median income adjusted for household size) for the county or Metropolitan Statistical Area where the property is or will be located.

Major hazard. A condition so severe that it makes the property unfit for habitation. (See also the definition of hazard in this section.)

Manufactured home. A structure that is built to Federally Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards and RHS Thermal Performance Standards. It is transportable in 1 or more sections, which in the traveling mode is 10-body feet (3.048 meters) or more in width, and when erected on site is 400 or more square feet (37.16 square meters), and which is built on a permanent chassis and designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation when connected to the required utilities. It is designed and constructed for permanent occupancy by a single family and contains permanent eating, cooking, sleeping, and sanitary facilities. The plumbing, heating, and electrical systems are contained in the structure. A permanent foundation is required.

Market value. The value of the property as determined by a current appraisal, RHS may authorize the use of a Broker's Price Opinion or similar instrument to determine market value in limited servicing situations.

Mobile home. A manufactured unit often referred to as a "trailer," designed to be used as a dwelling, but built prior to the enactment of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1980 (Pub. L. 96-399) enacted October 8, 1980.

Moderate income. An adjusted income that is greater than the low-income limit, but that does not exceed the HUD established low-income limit by more than \$5,500.

Modest housing. A property that is considered modest for the area, with a market value that does not exceed the applicable maximum loan limit as established by RHS in accordance with §3550.63. In addition, the property must not be designed for income producing activities nor have an in-ground swimming pool.

Modular or panelized home. Housing, constructed of one or more factory-built sections or panels, which, when completed, meets or exceeds the requirements of the recognized development standards (model building codes) for site built housing, and which is designed to be permanently connected to a site-built foundation.

Moratorium. A period of up to 2 years during which scheduled payments are not required, but are subject to repayment at a later date.

Mortgage. A form of security instrument or consensual lien on real property including a real estate mortgage or a deed of trust.

Net family assets. The value of assets available to a household that could be used towards housing costs. Net family assets are considered in the calculation of annual income and are used to determine whether the household must make additional cash contributions to improve or purchase the property.

Net recovery value. The market value of the security property minus anticipated expenses of liquidation, acquisition, and sale as determined by RHS.

New dwelling or unit. A dwelling that is to be constructed, or a dwelling that is less than 1 year old as evidenced by an occupancy permit, certificate of occupancy or similar document issued by the local authority and has never been occupied.

Nonprogram (NP) interest rate. The interest rate offered by RHS for loans made on NP terms.

NP property. Property that does not meet the program eligibility requirements outlined in §§ 3550.56 and 3550.57.

NP terms. Credit terms available from RHS when the applicant or property is not program-eligible.

Offset. Deductions to pay a debt owed to RHS from a borrower's retirement benefits, salary, income tax refund, or payments from other federal agencies to the borrower. Deductions from retirement benefits and salary generally apply only to current and former federal employees.

Participant. For the purpose of reviews and appeals, a participant is any individual or entity who has applied for, or whose right to participate in or receive a payment, loan, or other benefit is affected by an RHS decision.

Payment assistance. A payment subsidy available to eligible section 502 borrowers that reduces the effective interest rate of a loan (see § 3550.68(c)). Borrowers eligible for a payment subsidy receive payment assistance unless they are currently eligible for and receive interest credit. There are two methods of payment assistance. Payment Assistance Method 1 is found at §3550.68(c)(2). Payment Assistance Method 2 is found at §3550.68(c)(1).

Payment subsidy. A general term for subsidies which reduce the borrower's scheduled payment. It refers to either payment assistance or interest credit.

Person with disability. Any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, including functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.

PITI ratio. The amount paid by the borrower for principal, interest, taxes, and insurance (PITI), divided by repayment income.

Principal reduction attributed to subsidy (PRAS). Accelerated principal reduction that can occur when a borrower receives a reduced interest rate through a payment subsidy.

Prior lien. A security instrument or a judgment against the security property that is superior to the RHS debt instrument.

Program-eligible applicant. Any applicant meeting the eligibility requirements described in §3550.53.

Program-eligible property. A property eligible to be financed under this part, as determined by the criteria listed in §§3550.56 through 3550.59.

Program terms. Credit terms that are available only to program-eligible applicants for program-eligible properties.

Property. The land, dwelling, and related facilities for which the applicant will use RHS assistance.

Protective advances. Costs incurred by the Agency to protect the security interest of the Government that are charged to the borrower's account.

Real estate taxes. Taxes and the annual portion of assessments estimated to be due and payable on the property, reduced by any available tax exemption.

Recapture amount. An amount of subsidy to be repaid by the borrower upon disposition or nonoccupancy of the property.

Recipient. Any applicant, borrower, or grant recipient who applies for or receives assistance under the section 502 or 504 programs.

REO. The acronym for “Real Estate Owned.” It refers to property for which RHS holds title.

Repayment income. Used to determine whether an applicant has the ability to make monthly loan payments. Repayment income includes amounts excluded for the purpose of determining adjusted income. See § 3550.54 for a complete description.

RHS. The Rural Housing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, or its successor agency, formerly the Rural Housing and Community Development Service (RHCD), a successor agency to the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA).

RHS employee. Any employee of RHS, or any employee of the Rural Development mission area who carries out grant or loan origination or servicing functions for the section 502 or 504 programs.

RHS interest rate. The unsubsidized interest rate offered by RHS for loans made on program terms.

Rural area: A rural area is:

- (1) Open country which is not part of or associated with an urban area.
- (2) Any town, village, city, or place, including the immediate adjacent densely settled area, which is not part of or associated with an urban area and which:
 - (i) Has a population not in excess of 10,000 if it is rural in character, or
 - (ii) Has a population in excess of 10,000 but not in excess of 20,000, is not contained within a Metropolitan Statistical Area, and has a serious lack of mortgage credit for low- and moderate-income households as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of HUD.
- (3) An area classified as a rural area prior to October 1, 1990, (even if within a Metropolitan Statistical Area), with a population exceeding 10,000, but not in excess of 25,000, which is rural in character, and has a serious lack of mortgage credit for low- and moderate-income families. This is effective through receipt of census data for the year 2010.

Rural Development. A mission area within USDA which includes RHS, Rural Utilities Service (RUS), and Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS).

Scheduled payment. The monthly or annual installment on a promissory note plus escrow (if required), as modified by any payment subsidy agreement, delinquency workout agreement, other documented agreements between RHS and the borrower, or protective advances.

Secured loan. A loan that is collateralized by property so that in the event of a default on the loan, the property may be sold to satisfy the debt.

Security property. All the property that serves as collateral for an RHS loan.

Subsidy. Interest credit, payment assistance, or deferred mortgage assistance received by a borrower under the section 502 or 504 programs.

Total debt ratio. The amount paid by the borrower for PITI and any recurring monthly debt, divided by repayment income.

Unauthorized assistance. Any loan, payment subsidy, deferred mortgage payment, or grant for which there was no regulatory authorization or for which the recipient was not eligible.

U.S. citizen. An individual who resides as a citizen in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, or the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

USDA. The United States Department of Agriculture.

Unsecured loan. A loan evidenced only by the borrower's promissory note.

Value appreciation. The current market value of the property minus: the balance due prior lienholders, the unpaid balance of the RHS debt, unreimbursed closing costs (if any), principal reduction, the original equity (if any) of the borrower, and the value added by capital improvements.

Very low income. An adjusted income that does not exceed the HUD-established very low-income limit (generally 50 percent of median income adjusted for household size) for the county or the Metropolitan Statistical Area where the property is or will be located.

Veterans preference. A preference extended to any person applying for a loan or grant under this part who served on active duty and has been discharged or released from the active forces on conditions other than dishonorable from the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard. The preference applies to the serviceperson, or the family of a deceased serviceperson who died in service before the termination of such war or such period or era. The applicable timeframes are:

- (1) During the period of April 6, 1917, through March 31, 1921;
- (2) During the period of December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946;
- (3) During the period of June 27, 1950, through January 31, 1955;
- (4) For a period of more than 180 days, any part of which occurred after January 31, 1955, but on or before May 7, 1975; or
- (5) During the period beginning August 2, 1990, and ending the date prescribed by Presidential Proclamation or law.

§ 3550.11 State Director Assessment of Homeowner Education.

(a) State Director's will make an assessment of the availability of certified homeowner education in their respective states and maintain an annually updated listing of providers and their reasonable costs.

(b) The order of preference for homeowner education formats is as follows:

- (1) Classroom; one-on-one counseling; or interactive video conference.
- (2) If none of the formats in paragraph (b)(1) of this section is reasonably available; as determined under §3550.53, then the applicant may use interactive home-study or interactive telephone counseling of at least four hours duration.
- (3) If none of the formats in paragraphs (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this section is reasonably available as determined under § 3550.53, then the applicant may use on-line counseling to meet the homeownership education requirement.

(c) Homeownership education must include a letter or certificate of completion and be provided by homeownership education counselors that are certified by any of the following:

§ 3550.11 (c) (Con.)

- (1) The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD);
- (2) NeighborWorks America (NWA);
- (3) The National Federation of Housing Counselors (NFHC) ;
- (4) National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC); or
- (5) The State Housing Finance Agency or other qualified organization approved by the State Director.

(d) The provider will issue a letter or certificate of completion to document that the borrower has satisfactory knowledge of these minimum topics:

- (1) Preparing for homeownership (evaluate readiness to go from rental to homeownership),
- (2) Budgeting (pre and post-purchase),
- (3) Credit counseling,
- (4) Shopping for a home,
- (5) Lender differences (predatory lending),
- (6) Obtaining a mortgage (mortgage process, different types of mortgages),
- (7) Loan closing (closing process, documentation, closing costs),
- (8) Post-occupancy counseling (delinquency and foreclosure prevention),
- (9) Life as a homeowner (homeowner warranties, maintenance and repairs).

(e) The provider may tailor the homeownership education training to the needs of the borrower to ensure satisfactory knowledge of the topics listed in paragraph (d) of this section.

§§ 3550.12 - 3550.49 [Reserved]

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§ 3550.50 OMB control number.

The information collection requirements contained in this regulation have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and have been assigned OMB control number 0575-0172. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to vary from 5 minutes to 3 hours per response, with an average of 1 1/2 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. You are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Subpart B - Section 502 Origination

§ 3550.51 Program objectives.

Section 502 of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended authorizes the Rural Housing Service (RHS) to provide financing to help low- and very low-income persons who cannot obtain credit from other sources obtain adequate housing in rural areas. Resources for the section 502 program are limited, and therefore, applicants are required to use section 502 funds in conjunction with funding or financing from other sources, if feasible. Sections 3550.52 through 3550.73 set forth the requirements for originating loans on program terms. Section 3550.74 describes the differences for originating loans on nonprogram (NP) terms.

§ 3550.52 Loan purposes.

Section 502 funds may be used to buy, build, rehabilitate, improve, or relocate an eligible dwelling and provide related facilities for use by the borrower as a permanent residence. In limited circumstances section 502 funds may be used to refinance existing debt.

(a) Purchases from existing RHS borrowers. To purchase a property currently financed by an RHS loan, the new borrower must assume the existing RHS indebtedness. Section 502 funds may be used to provide additional financing or make repairs. Loan funds also may be used to permit a remaining borrower to purchase the equity of a departing co-borrower.

(b) Refinancing non-RHS loans. Debt from an existing non-RHS loan may be refinanced if the existing debt is secured by a lien against the property, RHS will have a first lien position on the security property after refinancing, and:

(1) In the case of loans for existing dwellings, if:

(i) Due to circumstances beyond the applicant's control, the applicant is in danger of losing the property, the debt is over \$5,000 and the debt was incurred for eligible program purposes prior to loan application or was a

§ 3550.52 (b) (Con.)

protective advance made by the mortgagee for items covered by the loan to be refinanced, including accrued interest, insurance premiums, real estate tax advances, or preliminary foreclosure costs; or

(ii) If a loan of \$5,000 or more is necessary for repairs to correct major deficiencies and make the dwelling decent, safe and sanitary and refinancing is necessary for the borrower to show repayment ability, regardless of the delinquency.

(2) In the case of loans for a building site without a dwelling, if:

(i) The debt to be refinanced was incurred for the sole purpose of purchasing the site,

(ii) The applicant is unable to acquire adequate housing without refinancing, and

(iii) The RHS loan will include funds to construct an appropriate dwelling on the site for the applicant's use.

(3) Debts incurred after the date of RHS loan application but before closing may be refinanced if the costs are incurred for eligible loan purposes and any construction work conforms to the standards specified in this part.

(c) Refinancing RHS debt. Under limited circumstances, an existing RHS loan may be refinanced in accordance with § 3550.204 to allow the borrower to receive payment assistance.

(d) Eligible costs. Improvements financed with loan funds must be on land which, after closing, is part of the security property. In addition to acquisition, construction, repairs, or the cost of relocating a dwelling, loan funds may be used to pay for:

(1) Reasonable expenses related to obtaining the loan, including legal, architectural and engineering, technical, title clearance, and loan closing fees; and appraisal, surveying, environmental, tax monitoring, and other technical services; and personal liability insurance fees for Mutual Self-Help borrowers.

(2) The cost of providing special design features or equipment when necessary because of a physical disability of the applicant or a member of the household.

(3) Reasonable connection fees, assessments, or the pro rata installment costs for utilities such as water, sewer, electricity, and gas for which the borrower is liable and which are not paid from other funds.

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§ 3550.52 (d) (Con.)

- (4) Reasonable and customary lender charges and fees if the RHS loan is being made in combination with a leveraged loan.
- (5) Real estate taxes that are due and payable on the property at the time of closing and for the establishment of escrow accounts for real estate taxes, hazard and flood insurance premiums, and related costs.
- (6) Fees to public and private nonprofit organizations that are tax exempt under the Internal Revenue Code for the development and packaging of loan applications, except for loans related to the purchase of an RHS Real Estate Owned (REO) property.
- (7) Purchasing and installing essential equipment in the dwelling, including ranges, refrigerators, washers or dryers, if these items are normally sold with dwellings in the area and if the purchase of these items is not the primary purpose of the loans.
- (8) Purchasing and installing approved energy savings measures and approved furnaces and space heaters that use fuel that is commonly used, economical, and dependably available.
- (9) Providing site preparation, including grading, foundation plantings, seeding or sodding, trees, walks, yard fences, and driveways to a building site.
- (10) Reasonable fees for homeownership education as determined by the State Director under §3550.11 of this subpart. Such fees may be added to the loan amount in excess of the area loan limit and appraised value of the house.

(e) Loan restrictions. Loan funds may not be used to:

- (1) Purchase an existing manufactured home, or for any other purposes prohibited in § 3550.73(b).
- (2) Purchase or improve income-producing land or buildings to be used principally for income-producing purposes.
- (3) Pay fees, commissions, or charges to for-profit entities related to loan packaging or referral of prospective applicants to RHS.

§ 3550.53 Eligibility requirements.

- (a) Income eligibility. At the time of loan approval, the household's adjusted income must not exceed the applicable low-income limit for the area, and at closing, must not exceed the applicable moderate-income limit for the area (see § 3550.54).
- (b) Citizenship status. The applicant must be a United States citizen or a noncitizen who qualifies as a legal alien as defined in § 3550.10.

§ 3550.53 (Con.)

(c) Primary residence. Applicants must agree to and have the ability to occupy the dwelling on a permanent basis.

(1) Because of the probability of transfer, loans will not be approved for military personnel on active duty unless the applicant will be discharged within a reasonable period of time.

(2) Because of the probability of moves after graduation, loans will not be approved for a full-time student unless the applicant intends to make the home a permanent residence and there are reasonable prospects that employment will be available in the area after graduation.

(3) If the home is being constructed or renovated an adult member of the household must be available to make inspections and authorize progress payments as the dwelling is being constructed.

(d) Eligibility of current homeowners. Current homeowners are not eligible for initial loans except as follows:

(1) Current homeowners may receive RHS loan funds to:

(i) refinance an existing loan under the conditions outlined in § 3550.52(b);

(ii) purchase a new dwelling if the current dwelling is deficient housing as defined in § 3550.10; or

(iii) make necessary repairs to the property which is financed with an affordable non-RHS loan.

(2) Current homeowners with an RHS loan may receive a subsequent loan.

(e) Legal capacity. Applicants must have the legal capacity to incur the loan obligation, or have a court appointed guardian or conservator who is empowered to obligate the applicant in real estate matters.

(f) Suspension or debarment. Applications from applicants who have been suspended or debarred from participation in federal programs will be handled in accordance with 7 CFR part 3017.

(g) Repayment ability. Repayment ability means applicants must demonstrate adequate and dependably available income. The determination of income dependability will include consideration of the applicant's past history of annual income.

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§ 3550.53 (g) (Con.)

(1) A very low-income applicant is considered to have repayment ability when the monthly amount required for payment of principal, interest, taxes, and insurance (PITI) does not exceed 29 percent of the applicant's repayment income, and the monthly amount required to pay PITI plus recurring monthly debts does not exceed 41 percent of the applicant's repayment income.

(2) A low-income applicant is considered to have repayment ability when the monthly amount required for payment of PITI does not exceed 33 percent of the applicant's repayment income, and the monthly amount required to pay PITI plus recurring monthly debts does not exceed 41 percent of repayment income.

(3) Repayment ratios may exceed the percentages specified in paragraphs (h)(1) and (h)(2) of this section if the applicant has demonstrated an ability to meet higher debt obligations, or if RHS determines, based on other compensating factors, that the household has a higher repayment ability.

(4) If an applicant does not meet the repayment ability requirements, the applicant can have another party join the application as a cosigner.

(5) If an applicant does not meet the repayment ability requirements, the applicant can have other household members join the application.

(h) Credit qualifications. Applicants must be unable to secure the necessary credit from other sources on terms and conditions that the applicant could reasonably be expected to fulfill. Applicants must have a credit history that indicates reasonable ability and willingness to meet debt obligations. An applicant with an outstanding judgment obtained by the United States in a federal court, other than the United States Tax Court, is not eligible for a loan or grant from RHS.

(1) Indicators of unacceptable credit include:

(i) Payments on any account where the amount of the delinquency exceeded one installment for more than 30 days within the last 12 months.

(ii) Payments on any account which was delinquent for more than 30 days on two or more occasions within a 12-month period.

(iii) A foreclosure which has been completed within the last 36 months.

(iv) An outstanding Internal Revenue Service tax lien or any other outstanding tax liens with no satisfactory arrangement for payment.

(v) A court-created or court-affirmed obligation or judgment caused by nonpayment that is currently outstanding or has been outstanding within the last 12 months, except for those excluded in paragraph (h)(2) of this section.

§ 3550.53 (h) (Con.)

(vi) Two or more rent payments paid 30 or more days late within the last 2 years. If the applicant has experienced no other credit problems in the past 2 years, only 1 year of rent history will be evaluated. Rent payment history requirements may be waived if the RHS loan will reduce shelter costs significantly and contribute to an improved repayment ability.

(vii) Outstanding collection accounts with a record of irregular payment with no satisfactory arrangements for repayment, or collection accounts that were paid in full within the last 6 months.

(viii) Non-agency debts written off within the last 36 months unless paid in full at least 12 months ago.

(ix) Agency debts that were debt settled within the last 36 months or are being considered for debt settlement.

(x) Delinquency on a federal debt.

(2) The following will not be considered indicators of unacceptable credit:

(i) A bankruptcy in which debts were discharged more than 36 months prior to the date of application or where an applicant successfully completed a bankruptcy debt restructuring plan and has demonstrated a willingness to meet obligations when due for the 12 months prior to the date of application.

(ii) A judgment satisfied more than 12 months before the date of application.

(3) When an application is rejected because of unacceptable credit, the applicant will be informed of the reason and source of information.

(i) Homeownership education. Applicants who are first-time homebuyers must agree to provide documentation, in the form of a completion certificate or letter from the provider, that a homeownership education course from a certified provider under § 3550.11 has been successfully completed as defined by the provider prior to loan closing. Requests for exceptions to the homeowner education requirement will be reviewed and granted on an individual case-by-case basis. The State Director may grant an exception the homeownership education requirement for individuals in geographic areas within the State where the State Director verifies that certified homeownership education is not reasonably available in the local area in any of the formats listed in § 3550.11(b). Whether such homeownership education is reasonably available will be determined based on factors including, but not limited to: distance, travel time, geographic obstacles, and cost. On a case-by-case basis, the State Director also may grant an exception, provided the applicant borrower documents a special need, such as a disability, that would unduly impede completing a homeownership course in a reasonably available format.

§ 3550.54 Calculation of income and assets.

(a) Repayment income. Repayment income is the annual amount of income from all sources that are expected to be received by those household members who are parties to the promissory note, except for any student financial aid received by these household members for tuition, fees, books, equipment, materials, and transportation. Repayment income is used to determine the household's ability to repay a loan.

(b) Annual income. Annual income is the income of all household members from all sources except those listed in (b)(1) through (b)(12) of this section:

- (1) earned income of persons under the age of 18 unless they are a borrower or a spouse of a member of the household,
- (2) payments received for the care of foster children or foster adults,
- (3) amounts granted for or in reimbursement of the cost of medical expenses,
- (4) earnings of each full-time student 18 years of age or older, except the head of household or spouse, that are in excess of any amount determined pursuant to section 501(b)(5) of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended,
- (5) temporary, nonrecurring, or sporadic income (including gifts),
- (6) lump sum additions to family assets such as inheritances; capital gains; insurance payments under health, accident, or worker's compensation policies; settlements for personal or property losses; and deferred periodic payments of supplemental security income and Social Security benefits received in a lump sum,
- (7) any earned income tax credit,
- (8) adoption assistance in excess of any amount determined pursuant to section 501(b)(5) of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended,
- (9) amounts received by the family in the form of refunds or rebates under State or local law for property taxes paid on the dwelling,
- (10) amounts paid by a State agency to a family with a developmentally disabled family member living at home to offset the cost of services and equipment needed to keep the developmentally disabled family member at home,
- (11) the full amount of any student financial aid, and
- (12) any other revenue exempted by a Federal statute; a list of which is available from any Rural Development office.

(c) Adjusted income. Adjusted income is used to determine program eligibility for section 502 and 504 and the amount of payment subsidy for which the household qualifies under

§ 3550.54 (c) (Con.)

section 502. Adjusted income is annual income as defined in paragraph (b) of this section less any of the following deductions for which the household is eligible.

(1) For each household member, except the head of household or spouse, who is under 18 years of age, 18 years of age or older with a disability, or a full-time student, the amount determined pursuant to section 501(b)(5) of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended.

(2) A deduction of reasonable expenses for the care of minor 12 years of age or under that:

(i) enable a family member to work or to further a member's education,

(ii) are not reimbursed or paid by another source, and

(iii) in the case of expenses to enable a family member to work do not exceed the amount of income earned by the family member enabled to work.

(3) Expenses related to the care of household members with disabilities that:

(i) enable a family member to work,

(ii) are not reimbursed from insurance or another source, and

(iii) are in excess of three percent of the household's annual income.

(4) For any elderly family, a deduction in the amount determined pursuant to section 501(b)(5) of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended.

(5) For elderly households only, a deduction for household medical expenses that are not reimbursed from insurance or another source and which in combination with any expenses related to the care of household members with disabilities described in paragraph (c)(3) of this section, are in excess of three percent of the household's annual income.

(d) Net family assets. Income from net family assets must be included in the calculation of annual and repayment income. Net family assets also are considered in determining whether a down payment is required.

(1) Net family assets include the cash value of:

(i) equity in real property, other than the dwelling or site,

(ii) cash on hand and funds in savings or checking accounts,

(iii) amounts in trust accounts that are available to the household,

§ 3550.54(d)(Con.)

- (iv) stocks, bonds, and other forms of capital investments including life insurance policies and retirement plans that are accessible to the applicant without retiring or terminating employment,
- (v) lump sum receipts such as lottery winnings, capital gains, inheritances,
- (vi) personal property held as an investment, and
- (vii) any value, in excess of the consideration received, for any business or household assets disposed for less than fair market value during the 2 years preceding the income determination. The value of assets disposed of for less than fair market value shall not be considered if they were disposed of as a result of foreclosure or bankruptcy or a divorce or separation settlement.

(2) Net family assets do not include:

- (i) interest in American Indian trust land,
- (ii) cash on hand which will be used to reduce the amount of the loan,
- (iii) the value of necessary items of personal property,
- (iv) assets that are part of the business, trade, or farming operation of any member of the household who is actively engaged in such operation,
- (v) the value of an irrevocable trust fund or any other trust over which no member of the household has control.

§ 3550.55 Applications.

(a) Application submissions. All persons applying for RHS loans must file a complete written application in a format specified by RHS. Applications will be accepted even when funds are not available.

(b) Application processing.

- (1) Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant specifying in writing the additional information that is needed to make the application complete.
- (2) An applicant may voluntarily withdraw an application at any time.
- (3) RHS may periodically request in writing that applicants reconfirm their interest in obtaining a loan. RHS may withdraw the application of any applicant who does not respond within the specified timeframe.
- (4) Applicants who are eligible will be notified in writing. If additional information becomes available that indicates that the original eligibility determination may have

§ 3550.55(b)(Con.)

been incorrect, or that circumstances have changed, RHS may reconsider the application and the applicant may be required to submit additional information.

(5) Applicants who are ineligible will be notified in writing and provided with the specific reasons for the rejection.

(c) Selection for processing. When funding is not sufficient to serve all program-eligible applicants, applications will be selected for processing using the funding priorities specified in this paragraph. Within priority categories, applications will be processed in the order that the completed applications are received. In the case of applications with equivalent priority status that are received on the same day, preference will be extended to applicants qualifying for a veterans preference. After selection for processing, loans are funded on a first-come, first-served basis.

(1) First priority will be given to existing customers who request subsequent loans to correct health and safety hazards.

(2) Second priority will be given to loans related to the sale of an REO property or the transfer of an existing RHS financed property.

(3) Third priority will be given to applicants facing housing related hardships including applicants who have been living in deficient housing for more than 6 months, current homeowners in danger of losing a property through foreclosure, and other circumstances determined by RHS on a case-by-case basis to constitute a hardship.

(4) Fourth priority will be given to applicants seeking, loans for the construction of dwellings in an RHS-approved Mutual Self-Help project or loans that will leverage funding or financing from other sources.

(5) Applications from applicants who do not qualify for priority consideration in paragraphs (c)(1), (c)(2), (c)(3), or (c)(4) of this section will be selected for processing after all applications with priority status have been processed.

(d) Applicant timeframe. RHS will specify a reasonable timeframe within which eligible applicants selected for processing must provide the information needed to underwrite the loan.

§ 3550.56 Site requirements.

(a) Rural areas. Loans may be made only in rural areas designated by RHS. If an area designation is changed to non-rural:

7 CFR Part 3550
§ 3550.56 (a)(Con.)

(1) New conditional commitments will be made and existing conditional commitments will be honored only in conjunction with an applicant for a section 502 loan who applied for assistance before the area designation changed.

(2) REO property sales and transfers with assumption may be processed.

(3) Subsequent loans may be made either in conjunction with a transfer with assumption of an RHS loan or to repair properties that have RHS loans.

(b) Site standards. Sites must be developed in accordance with 7 CFR part 1924, subpart C and any applicable standards imposed by a State or local government.

(1) The site must not be large enough to subdivide into more than one site under existing local zoning ordinances,

(2) The site must not include farm service buildings, though small outbuildings such as a storage shed may be included, and

(3) The value of the site must not exceed 30 percent of the “as improved” market value of the property. The State Director may waive the 30 percent requirement in high cost areas where other lenders permit a higher percentage.

§ 3550.57 Dwelling requirements.

(a) Modest dwelling. The property must be one that is considered modest for the area, must not be designed for income providing purposes, must not have an in-ground swimming pool or have a market value in excess of the applicable maximum loan limit, in accordance with §3550.63, unless RHS authorizes an exception under this paragraph. An exception may be granted on a case-by-case basis to accommodate the specific needs of an applicant, such as to serve exceptionally large households or to provide reasonable accommodation for a household member with a disability. Any additional loan amount approved must not exceed the amount required to address the specific need.

(b) New dwellings. Construction must meet the requirements in 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A.

(c) Existing dwellings. Existing dwellings must be structurally sound; functionally adequate; in good repair, or to be placed in good repair with loan funds; have adequate electrical, heating, plumbing, water, and wastewater disposal systems; and be free of termites and other wood damaging pests and organisms.

§ 3550.58 Ownership requirements.

After the loan is closed, the borrower must have an acceptable interest in the property as evidenced by one of the following.

- (a) Fee-simple ownership. Acceptable fee-simple ownership is evidenced by a fully marketable title with a deed vesting a fee-simple interest in the property to the borrower.
- (b) Secure leasehold interest. A written lease is required. To be acceptable, a leasehold interest must have an unexpired term that is at least 150 percent of the term of the mortgage, unless the loan is guaranteed, in which case the unexpired term of the lease must be at least 2 years longer than the loan term. In no case may the unexpired term be less than 25 years.
- (c) Life estate interest. To be acceptable a life estate interest must provide the borrower with rights of present possession, control, and beneficial use of the property. Generally, persons with any remainder interests must be signatories to the mortgage. All of the remainder interests need not be included in the mortgage to the extent that one or more of the persons holding remainder interests are not legally competent (and there is no representative who can legally consent to the mortgage), cannot be located, or if the remainder interests are divided among such a large number of people that it is not practical to obtain the signatures of all of the remainder interests. In such cases, the loan may not exceed the value of the property interests owned by the persons executing the mortgage.
- (d) Undivided interest. All legally competent co-owners will be required to sign the mortgage. When one or more of the co-owners are not legally competent (and there is no representative who can legally consent to the mortgage), cannot be located, or the ownership interests are divided among so large a number of co-owners that it is not practical for all of their interests to be mortgaged, their interests not exceeding 50 percent may be excluded from the security requirements. In such cases, the loan may not exceed the value of the property interests owned by the persons executing the mortgage.
- (e) Possessory rights. Acceptable forms of ownership include possessory rights on an American Indian reservation or State-owned land and the interest of an American Indian in land held in severalty under trust patents or deeds containing restrictions against alienation, provided that land in trust or restricted status will remain in trust or restricted status.

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§ 3550.59 Security requirements.

Before approving any loan, RHS will impose requirements to secure its interests.

(a) Adequate security. A loan will be considered adequately secured only when all of the following requirements are met:

(1) RHS obtains at closing a mortgage on all ownership interests in the security property or the requirements of § 3550.58 are satisfied.

(2) No liens prior to the RHS mortgage exist at the time of closing and no junior liens are likely to be taken immediately subsequent to or at the time of closing, unless the other liens are taken as part of a leveraging strategy or the RHS loan is essential for repairs and the senior lien secures an affordable non-RHS loan. Liens junior to the RHS lien may be allowed at loan closing if the junior lien will not interfere with the purpose or repayment of the RHS loan. When the junior lien involves a grant or a forgivable affordable housing product, the total debt may exceed the market value by the amount of the forgivable loan or grant up to 5 percent.

(3) The provisions of 7 CFR part 1927, subpart B regarding title clearance and the use of legal services have been followed.

(4) Existing and proposed property improvements are totally on the site and do not encroach on adjoining property.

(b) Guaranteed payment. Mortgage insurance guaranteeing payment from a Government agency or Indian tribe is adequate security.

§ 3550.60 Escrow account.

RHS may require that customers deposit into an escrow account amounts necessary to ensure that the account will contain sufficient funds to pay real estate taxes, hazard and flood insurance premiums, and other related costs when they are due in accordance with the Real Estate Settlement and Procedures Act (RESPA) of 1974 (12 U.S.C. 2601, et seq.) and section 501(e) of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended.

§ 3550.61 Insurance.

(a) Borrower responsibility. Any borrower with a secured indebtedness in excess of \$15,000 at the time of loan approval must furnish and continually maintain hazard insurance on the security property, with companies, in amounts, and on terms and conditions acceptable to RHS including a “loss payable clause” payable to RHS to protect the Government’s interest.

(b) Amount. The borrower is required to insure the dwelling and any other essential buildings in an amount equal to the insurable value of the dwelling and other essential buildings. However, in cases where the borrower’s outstanding secured indebtedness is less than the insurable value of the dwelling and other essential buildings, the borrower may elect a lower coverage provided it is not less than the outstanding secured indebtedness. If the borrower fails, or is unable, to insure the secured property, RHS will force place insurance and charge the cost to the borrower’s account. Force place insurance only provides insurance coverage to the Agency and does not provide any direct coverage or benefit to the borrower. The amount of the lender-placed coverage generally will be the property’s last known insured value.

(c) Flood insurance. Flood insurance must be obtained and maintained for the life of the loan for all property located in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). RHS actions will be consistent with 7 CFR part 1806, subpart B which addressed flood insurance requirements. If flood insurance through FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program is not available in an SFHA, the property is not eligible for federal financial assistance.

(d) Losses.

(1) Loss deductible clauses for required insurance coverage may not exceed the generally accepted minimums based on current industry standards and local market conditions.

(2) Customers must immediately notify RHS of any loss or damage to insured property and collect the amount of the loss from the insurance company.

(3) Depending on the amount of the loss, RHS may require that loss payments be supervised. All repairs and replacements done by or under the direction of the borrower, or by contract, will be planned, performed, inspected, and paid for in accordance with 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A.

(4) When insurance funds remain after all repairs, replacements, and other authorized disbursements have been made, the funds will be applied in the following order:

(i) Prior liens, including delinquent property taxes.

(ii) Past-due amounts.

7 CFR Part 3550
§ 3550.61 (d) (Con.)

- (iii) Protective advances due.
 - (iv) Released to the customer if the RHS debt is adequately secured.
- (5) If a loss occurs when insurance is not in force, the borrower is responsible for making the needed repairs or replacements and ensuring that the insurance is reinstated on the property.
- (6) If the borrower is not financially able to make the repairs, RHS may take one of the following actions:
- (i) Make a subsequent loan for repairs.
 - (ii) Subordinate the RHS lien to permit the borrower to obtain funds for needed repairs from another source.
 - (iii) Permit the borrower to obtain funds secured by a junior lien from another source.
 - (iv) Make a protective advance to protect the Government's interest.
 - (v) Accelerate the account.

§ 3550.62 Appraisals.

- (a) Requirement. An appraisal is required when the debt to be secured exceeds \$15,000 or whenever RHS determines that it is necessary to establish the adequacy of the security. Appraisals must be made in accordance with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices. When other real estate is taken as additional security, it will be appraised if it represents a substantial portion of the security for the loan.
- (b) Fees. RHS will charge a fee for each loan application that requires an appraisal, except the appraisal fee is not required on appraisals done for subsequent loans needed to make minimal, essential repairs or in cases where another party provides an appraisal which is acceptable to RHS. Fees collected in connection with a dwelling constructed under an approved conditional commitment will be paid to the contractor at closing to offset the cost of the real estate appraisal that is included in the conditional commitment fee.

§ 3550.63 Maximum loan limit.

Total secured indebtedness must not exceed the area loan limit or market value limitations specified in paragraphs (a) or (b) of this section, whichever is lower. Any loan amount for the RHS appraisal, tax monitoring fee, and the charge to establish an escrow account for taxes and insurance will not be subject to the limitations specified below. This section does not apply to loans on NP terms.

§ 3550.63 (Con.)

(a) Area loan limit. (1) The area loan limit is the maximum value of the property RHS will finance in a given locality. Subject to the following, this limit is based on cost data plus the market value of an improved lot, or the State Housing Authority limits, whichever the State Director determines most appropriately reflects the value of modest housing for the area:

(i) The cost of the structure is based upon the cost to construct a modest home and is obtained by RHS from a nationally recognized residential cost provider.

(ii) The market value of an improved site (without the dwelling) is based upon current sales data for typical housing sites and reasonable and typical costs of site improvements.

(iii) The applicable State Housing Authority limit will only be considered if it is within 10 percent of the cost data plus the market value of an improved lot.

(iv) The area loan limit may not exceed the applicable local HUD section 203(b) limit.

(v) All area loan limit data will be updated at least annually and is available in any Rural Development office.

(2) The maximum loan limit calculated under paragraph (a)(1) will be reduced in the following situations:

(i) When the applicant owns the site or is purchasing the site at a sales price below market value, the market value of the lot will be deducted from the maximum loan limit, and

(ii) When an applicant is receiving a housing grant or other form of affordable housing assistance for purposes other than closing costs, the amount(s) of such grants and affordable housing assistance will be deducted from the maximum loan limit.

(3) The maximum loan limit for self-help housing will be calculated by adding the total of the market value of the lot (including reasonable and typical costs of site development), the cost of construction, and the value of sweat equity. The total of these three factors cannot exceed the limit established in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

7 CFR Part 3550
§ 3550.63 (Con.)

(b) Market value limitation.

- (1) The market value limitation is 100 percent of market value for existing housing and for new dwellings for which RHS will receive adequate documentation of construction quality and the source of such documentation is acceptable to RHS.
- (2) The market value limitation is 90 percent of market value for new dwellings for which adequate documentation of construction quality is not available.
- (3) The market value limitation can be increased by:
 - (i) Up to one percent, if RHS makes a subsequent loan for closing costs only, in conjunction with the sale of an REO property or an assumption.
 - (ii) The amount necessary to make a subsequent loan for repairs necessary to protect the Government's interest, and reasonable closing costs.
 - (iii) The amount necessary to refinance an existing borrower's RHS loans, plus closing costs associated with the new loan.

§ 3550.64 Down payment.

Elderly families must use any net family assets in excess of \$20,000 towards a down payment on the property. Non-elderly families must use net family assets in excess of \$15,000 towards a down payment on the property. Applicants may contribute assets in addition to the required down payment to further reduce the amount to be financed.

§ 3550.65 [Reserved]

§ 3550.66 Interest rate.

Loans will be written using the applicable RHS interest rate in effect at loan approval or loan closing, whichever is lower. Information about current interest rates is available in any Rural Development office.

§ 3550.67 Repayment period.

Loans will be scheduled for repayment over a period that does not exceed the expected useful life of the property as a dwelling. The loan repayment period will not exceed:

- (a) Thirty-three years in all cases except as noted in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section.

§ 3550.67 (Con.)

(b) Thirty-eight years:

(1) For initial loans, or subsequent loans made in conjunction with an assumption, if the applicant's adjusted income does not exceed 60 percent of the area adjusted median income and the longer term is necessary to show repayment ability.

(2) For subsequent loans not made in conjunction with an assumption if the applicant's initial loan was for a period of 38 years, the applicant's adjusted income at the time the subsequent loan is approved does not exceed 60 percent of area adjusted median income, and the longer terms is necessary to show repayment ability.

(c) Ten years for loans not exceeding \$2,500.

(d) Thirty years for manufactured homes.

§ 3550.68 Payment subsidies.

RHS administers three types of payment subsidies: interest credit, payment assistance method 1 and payment assistance method 2. Payment subsidies are subject to recapture when the borrower transfers title or ceases to occupy the property.

(a) Eligibility for payment subsidy.

(1) Applicants or borrowers who receive loans on program terms are eligible to receive payment subsidy if they personally occupy the property and have adjusted income at or below the applicable moderate-income limit.

(2) Payment subsidy may be granted for initial loans or subsequent loans made in conjunction with an assumption only if the term of the loan is at least 25 years or more.

(3) Payment subsidy may be granted for subsequent loans not made in conjunction with an assumption if the initial loan was for a term of 25 years or more.

(b) Determining type of payment subsidy.

(1) A borrower currently receiving interest credit will continue to receive it for the initial loan and for any subsequent loan for as long as the borrower is eligible for and remains on interest credit.

(2) A borrower currently receiving payment assistance using payment assistance method 1 will continue to receive it for the initial loan and for any subsequent loan for as long as the borrower is eligible for and remains on payment assistance method 1.

(3) A borrower who has never received payment subsidy, or who has stopped receiving interest credit or payment assistance method 1, and at a later date again qualifies for a payment subsidy, will receive payment assistance method 2.

(4) A borrower may not opt to change payment assistance methods.

(c) Calculation of payment assistance. Regardless of the method used, payment assistance may not exceed the amount necessary if the loan were amortized at an interest rate of 1 percent.

(1) Payment Assistance Method 2. The amount of payment assistance granted is the lesser of the difference between:

(i) The annualized promissory note installments for the combined RHS loan and eligible leveraged loans plus the cost of taxes and insurance less 24 percent of the borrower's adjusted income, or

(ii) The annualized promissory note installments for the RHS loan less the amount the borrower would pay if the loan were amortized at an interest rate of 1 percent.

(2) Payment Assistance Method 1. The amount of payment assistance granted is the difference between the annualized note rate installment as prescribed on the promissory note and the lesser of:

(i) The floor payment, which is defined as a minimum percentage of adjusted income that the borrower must pay for PITI: 22 percent for very low-income borrowers, 24 percent for low-income borrowers with adjusted income below 65 percent of area adjusted median, and 26 percent for low-income borrowers with adjusted incomes between 65 and 80 percent of area adjusted median; or

(ii) The annualized note rate installment and the payment at the equivalent interest rate, which is determined by a comparison of the borrower's adjusted income to the adjusted median income for the area in which the security property is located. The following chart is used to determine the equivalent interest rate.

§ 3550.68 (c)(2) (Con.)

PERCENTAGE OF MEDIAN INCOME AND THE EQUIVALENT INTEREST RATE

When the applicant's adjusted income is:

Equal to or more than:	BUT less than:	THEN the equivalent interest rate is*
00 %	50.01 of adjusted median income	1 %
50.01 %	55 of adjusted median income	2 %
55 %	60 of adjusted median income	3 %
60 %	65 of adjusted median income	4 %
65 %	70 of adjusted median income	5 %
70 %	75 of adjusted median income	6 %
75 %	80.01 of adjusted median income	6.5%
80.01 %	90 of adjusted median income	7.5 %
90 %	100 of adjusted median income	8.5 %
100 %	110 % of adjusted median income	9 %
110 %	or more than adjusted median income	9.5 %

* Or note rate, whichever is less; in no case will the equivalent interest rate be less than one percent.

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§ 3550.68 (Con.)

(d) Calculation of interest credit. The amount of interest credit granted is the difference between the sum of the annual installments due at the promissory note interest rate and the greater of:

- (1) Twenty percent of the borrower's adjusted income less the cost of real estate taxes and insurance, or
- (2) The amount the borrower would pay if the loan were amortized at an interest rate of one percent.

(e) Annual review. The borrower's income will be reviewed annually to determine whether the borrower is eligible for continued payment subsidy. The borrower must notify RHS whenever an adult member of the household changes or obtains employment, there is a change in household composition, or if income increases by at least 10 percent so that RHS can determine whether a review of the borrower's circumstances is required.

§ 3550.69 Deferred mortgage payments.

For qualified borrowers, RHS may defer up to 25 percent of the monthly principal and interest payment at 1 percent for up to 15 years. This assistance may be granted only at initial loan closing and is reviewed annually. Deferred mortgage payments are subject to recapture when the borrower transfers title or ceases to occupy the property.

(a) Eligibility. In order to qualify for deferred mortgage payments, all of the following must be true:

- (1) The applicant's adjusted income at the time of initial loan approval does not exceed the applicable very low-income limits.
- (2) The loan term is 38 years, or 30 years for a manufactured home.
- (3) The applicant's payments for principal and interest, calculated at a one percent interest rate for the maximum allowable term, plus estimated costs for taxes and insurance exceeds:
 - (i) For applicants receiving payment assistance, 29 percent of the applicant's repayment income by more than \$10 per month, or
 - (ii) For applicants receiving interest credit, 20 percent of adjusted income by more than \$10 per month.

§ 3550.69 (Con.)

(b) Amount and terms.

(1) The amount of the mortgage payment to be deferred will be the difference between the applicant's payment for principal and interest, calculated at one percent interest for the maximum allowable term, plus estimated costs for taxes and insurance and:

(i) For applicants receiving payment assistance, 29 percent of the applicant's repayment income.

(ii) For applicants receiving interest credit, 20 percent of adjusted income.

(2) Deferred mortgage payment agreements will be effective for a 12-month period.

(3) Deferred mortgage assistance may be continued for up to 15 years after loan closing. Once a borrower becomes ineligible for deferred mortgage assistance, the borrower can never again receive deferred mortgage assistance.

(c) Annual review. The borrower's income, taxes, and insurance will be reviewed annually to determine eligibility for continued deferred mortgage assistance. The borrower must notify RHS whenever an adult member of the household changes or obtains employment or if income increases by at least 10 percent so that RHS can determine whether a review of the borrower's circumstances is required.

§ 3550.70 Conditional commitments.

A conditional commitment is a determination by RHS that a dwelling offered for sale will be acceptable for purchase by a qualified RHS loan applicant if it is built or rehabilitated in accordance with RHS-approved plans, specifications, and regulations and priced within the lesser of the property's appraised value or the applicable maximum loan limit. The conditional commitment does not reserve funds, does not guarantee funding, and does not ensure that an eligible loan applicant will be available to buy the dwelling.

(a) Eligibility. To be eligible to request a conditional commitment, the builder, dealer-contractor, or seller must:

(1) Have an adequate ownership interest in the property, as defined in § 3550.58, prior to the beginning of any planned construction;

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§ 3550.70 (a) (Con.)

- (2) Have the experience and ability to complete any proposed work in a competent and professional manner;
- (3) Have the legal capacity to enter into the required agreements;
- (4) Be financially responsible and have the ability to finance or obtain financing for any proposed construction or rehabilitation; and
- (5) Comply with the requirements of 7 CFR part 1901, subpart E and all applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders relating to equal opportunity. Anyone who receives 5 or more conditional commitments during a 12-month period must obtain RHS approval of an affirmative marketing plan.

(b) Limitations. Conditional commitments for new or substantially rehabilitated dwellings will not be issued after construction has started. RHS may limit the total number of conditional commitments issued in any locality based on market demand.

(c) Commitment period. A conditional commitment will be valid for 12 months from the date of issuance. The commitment may be extended for up to an additional 6 months if there are unexpected delays in construction caused by such factors as bad weather, materials shortages, or marketing difficulties. Conditional commitments may be canceled if construction does not begin within 60 days after the commitment is issued.

(d) Conditional commitments involving packaging of applications. A conditional commitment may be made to a seller, builder, or dealer-contractor who packages an RHS loan application for a prospective purchaser. In cases where the dwelling is to be constructed for sale to a specific eligible applicant, all of the following conditions must be met:

- (1) The conditional commitment will not be approved until the applicant's loan has been approved;
- (2) Construction will not begin until loan funds are obligated for the loan. Exceptions may be made when it appears likely that funding will be forthcoming and as long as the RHS lien priority is not jeopardized. The sales agreement must indicate that the loan has been approved but not funded and must provide that if the loan is not closed within 90 days of the date of approval, the contractor may terminate the sales agreement and sell the property to another party. If the sales agreement is terminated, the conditional commitment will be honored for another eligible loan applicant for the remaining period of the commitment; and
- (3) The RHS loan will be closed only after the dwelling is constructed or the required rehabilitation completed and final inspection has been made.

§ 3550.70 (Con.)

(e) Fees. An application for a conditional commitment must include payment of the conditional commitment fee. The fee will be refunded if for any reason preliminary inspection of the property or investigation of the conditional commitment applicant indicates that a conditional commitment will not be issued. Application fees will not be refunded for any property on which the required appraisal has been made.

(f) Failure of conditional commitment applicant or dwelling to qualify. The conditional commitment applicant will be informed if the conditional commitment is denied. Conditional commitments will be canceled if the property does not meet program requirements.

(g) Changes in plans, specifications, or commitment price. The holder of the conditional commitment must request approval for changes in plans, specifications, and commitment price. RHS may approve the changes if the following requirements are met:

- (1) The property price does not exceed the maximum loan limit and increases in costs are due to factors beyond the control of the commitment holder, and
- (2) The requested changes are justifiable and appropriate.

(h) Builder's warranty. The builder or seller, as appropriate, must execute either an RHS-approved "Builder's Warranty," or provide a 10-year insured warranty when construction is completed or the loan is closed.

§ 3550.71 Special requirements for condominiums.

RHS loans may be made for condominium units under the following conditions:

(a) The unit is in a project approved or accepted by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), or the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac).

(b) The condominium project complies with the requirements of the condominium enabling statute and all other applicable laws. Any right of first refusal in the condominium documents will not impair the rights of RHS to:

- (1) Foreclose or take title to a condominium unit pursuant to the remedies in the mortgage;
- (2) Accept a deed in lieu of foreclosure in the event of default by a mortgagor; and
- (3) Sell or lease a unit acquired by RHS.

(c) If RHS obtains title to a condominium unit pursuant to the remedies in its mortgage or through foreclosure, RHS will not be liable for more than 6 months of the unit's unpaid regularly budgeted dues or charges accrued before acquisition of the title to the unit by RHS. The homeowners association's lien priority may include costs of collecting unpaid dues.

(d) In case of condemnation or substantial loss to the units or common elements of the condominium project, unless at least two-thirds of the first mortgagees or unit owners of the individual condominium units have given their consent, the homeowners association may not:

- (1) By act or omission seek to abandon or terminate the condominium project;
- (2) Change the pro rata interest or obligations of any condominium unit in order to levy assessments or charges, allocate distribution of hazard insurance proceeds or condemnation awards, or determine the pro rata share of ownership of each condominium unit in the common elements;
- (3) Partition or subdivide any condominium unit;
- (4) Seek to abandon, partition, subdivide, encumber, sell, or transfer the common elements by act or omission (the granting of easements for public utilities or other public purposes consistent with the intended use of the common elements by the condominium project is not a transfer within the meaning of this clause); or
- (5) Use hazard insurance proceeds for losses to any condominium property (whether units or common elements) for other than the repair, replacement, or reconstruction of the condominium property.

(e) All taxes, assessments, and charges that may become liens prior to the first mortgage under local law relate only to the individual condominium units and not to the condominium project as a whole.

(f) No provision of the condominium documents gives a condominium unit owner or any other party priority over any rights of RHS as first or second mortgagee of the condominium unit pursuant to its mortgage in the case of a payment to the unit owner of insurance proceeds or condemnation awards for losses to or taking of condominium units or common elements.

(g) If the condominium project is on a leasehold the underlying lease provides adequate security of tenure as described in § 3550.58(b).

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§ 3550.71 (Con.)

(h) At least 70 percent of the units have been sold. Multiple purchases of condominium units by one owner are counted as one sale when determining if the sales requirement has been met.

(i) No more than 15 percent of the unit owners are more than 1 month delinquent in payment of homeowners association dues or assessments at the time the RHS loan is closed.

§ 3550.72 Community land trusts.

Eligible dwellings located on land owned by a community land trust may be financed if:

(a) The loan meets all the requirements of this subpart, and

(b) Any restrictions, imposed by the community land trust on the property or applicant are:

(1) Reviewed and accepted by RHS before loan closing, and

(2) Automatically and permanently terminated upon foreclosure or acceptance by RHS of a deed in lieu of foreclosure.

§ 3550.73 Manufactured homes.

With the exception of the restrictions and additional requirements contained in this section, section 502 loans on manufactured homes are subject to the same conditions as all other section 502 loans.

(a) Eligible costs. In addition to the eligible costs described in § 3550.52(d), RHS may finance the following activities related to manufactured homes when a real estate mortgage covers both the unit and the site:

(1) Purchase of an eligible unit, transportation, and set-up costs, and purchase of an eligible site if not already owned by the applicant.

(2) Site development work in accordance with 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A.

(3) Subsequent loans in conjunction with an assumption or sale of an REO property, or

(4) Subsequent loans for repairs of units financed under section 502.

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§3550.73 (Con.)

(b) Loan restrictions. In addition to the loan restrictions described in § 3550.52(e), RHS may not use loan funds to finance:

- (1) An existing unit and site unless it is already financed with a section 502 loan or is an RHS REO property.
- (2) The purchase of a site without also financing the unit.
- (3) Alteration or remodeling of the unit when the initial loan is made.
- (4) Furniture, including movable articles of personal property such as drapes, beds, bedding, chairs, sofas, divans, lamps, tables, televisions, radios, stereo sets, and other similar items of personal property. Furniture does not include wall-to-wall carpeting, refrigerators, ovens, ranges, washing machines, clothes dryers, heating or cooling equipment, or other similar items.

(c) Dealer-contractors. No loans will be made on a manufactured home sold by any entity that is not an approved dealer-contractor that will provide complete sales, service, and site development services.

(d) Loan term. The maximum term of a loan on a manufactured home is 30 years.

(e) Construction and development. Unit construction, site development and set-up must conform to the Federal Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards (FMHCSS) and 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A. Development under the Mutual Self-Help and borrower construction methods is not permitted for manufactured homes.

(f) Contract requirements. The dealer-contractor must sign a construction contract, as specified in 7 CFR § 1924.6 which will cover both the unit and site development work. The use of multi-contracts is prohibited. A dealer-contractor may use subcontractors if the dealer-contractor is solely responsible for all work under the contract. Payment for all work will be in accordance with 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A, except no payment will be made for materials or property stored on site (e.g., payment for a unit will be made only after it is permanently attached to the foundation).

(g) Lien release requirements. All persons furnishing materials or labor in connection with the contract except the manufacturer of the unit must sign a Release by Claimants document, as specified in 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A. The manufacturer of the unit must furnish an executed manufacturer's certificate of origin to verify that the unit is free and clear of all legal encumbrances.

§ 3550.73 (Con.)

(h) Warranty requirements. The dealer-contractor must provide a warranty in accordance with the provisions of 7 CFR § 1924.12. The warranty must identify the unit by serial number. The dealer-contractor must certify that the unit substantially complies with the plans and specifications and the manufactured home has sustained no hidden damage during transportation and, if manufactured in separate sections, that the sections were properly joined and sealed according to the manufacturer's specifications. The dealer-contractor will also furnish the applicant with a copy of all manufacturer's warranties.

§ 3550.74 Nonprogram loans.

NP terms may be extended to applicants who do not qualify for program credit, or for properties that do not qualify as program properties, when it is in the best interest of the Government. NP loans are originated and serviced according to the requirements for program loans except as indicated in this section.

(a) Purpose. NP terms may be offered to expedite:

- (1) Sale of an REO property.
- (2) Assumption of an existing program loan on new rates and terms. If additional funds are required to purchase the property, the applicant must obtain them from another source.
- (3) Conversion of a program loan that has received unauthorized assistance.
- (4) Continuation of a loan on a portion of a security property when the remainder is being transferred and the RHS debt is not paid in full.

(b) Terms.

(1) Rate and term:

- (i) For an applicant who intends to occupy the property, the term will not exceed 30 years.
- (ii) For other applicants, the term will not exceed 10 years. If more favorable terms are necessary to facilitate the sale, the loan may be amortized over a period of up to 20 years with payment in full due not later than 10 years from the date of closing.

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§ 3550.74 (b)(1) (Con.)

(iii) An applicant with a NP loan under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section who wishes to retain the property and purchase a new property with RHS credit must purchase the second property according to the terms of paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section, even if the new property will serve as the applicant's principal residence.

(2) NP loans are written at the NP interest rate in effect at the time of loan approval.

(3) NP borrowers are not eligible for payment assistance or a moratorium.

(c) Additional requirements.

(1) NP applicants other than public bodies and nonprofit organizations must pay a nonrefundable application fee.

(2) NP applicants must make a down payment based upon the purchase price and whether the applicant intends to personally occupy the property or use it for other purposes.

(3) NP applicants cannot finance loan closing costs or escrow, tax service, or appraisal fees.

(d) Reduced restrictions.

(1) NP applicants need not be unable to obtain other credit in order to receive a NP loan and are not required to refinance with private credit when they are able to do so.

(2) NP applicants are not required to occupy the property.

(3) NP applicants are not subject to leasing restrictions.

(e) Waiver of costs. When the purpose of the loan is the conversion of a program loan that has received unauthorized assistance or continuation of a loan on a portion of a security property when the remainder is being transferred, the application fee, appraisal fee, and down payment may be waived.

§§ 3550.75 - 3550.99 [Reserved]

§ 3550.100 OMB control number.

The information collection requirements contained in this regulation have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and have been assigned OMB control number 0575-0172. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to vary from 5 minutes to 3 hours per response, with an average of 1 1/2 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. You are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Subpart C - Section 504 Origination and Section 306C Water and Waste Disposal Grants

§ 3550.101 Program objectives.

This subpart sets forth policies for administering loans and grants under section 504(a) of title V of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended. Section 504 loans and grants are intended to help very low-income owner-occupants in rural areas repair their properties. This subpart also covers Water and Waste Disposal grants to individuals authorized by Section 306C(b) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, (7 U.S.C. 1926c).

§ 3550.102 Grant and loan purposes.

(a) Grant funds. Grant funds may be used only to pay costs for repairs and improvements that will remove identified health and safety hazards or to repair or remodel dwellings to make them accessible and useable for household members with disabilities. Unused grant funds must be returned to the Rural Housing Service (RHS).

(b) Loan funds. Loan funds may be used to make general repairs and improvements to properties or to remove health and safety hazards, as long as the dwelling remains modest in size and design.

(c) Eligibility of mobile and manufactured homes. Repairs necessary to remove health and safety hazards may be made to mobile or manufactured homes provided:

- (1) The applicant owns the home and site and has occupied the home prior to filing an application with RHS, and
- (2) The mobile or manufactured home is on a permanent foundation or will be put on a permanent foundation with section 504 funds.

(d) Eligible costs. In addition to construction costs to make necessary repairs and improvements, loan and grant funds may be used for:

- (1) Reasonable expenses related to obtaining the loan or grant, including legal, architectural and engineering, title clearance, and loan closing fees; and appraisal, surveying, environmental, tax monitoring, and other technical services.
- (2) The cost of providing special design features or equipment when necessary because of a physical disability of the applicant or a member of the household.
- (3) Reasonable connection fees, assessments, or the pro rata installation costs for utilities such as water, sewer, electricity, and gas for which the borrower is liable and which are not paid from other funds.
- (4) Real estate taxes that are due and payable on the property at the time of closing and for the establishment of escrow accounts for real estate taxes, hazard and flood insurance premiums, and related costs.
- (5) Fees to public and private nonprofit organizations that are tax exempt under the Internal Revenue Code for the development and packaging of applications.

(e) Restrictions on uses of loan or grant funds. Section 504 funds may not be used to:

- (1) Assist in the construction of a new dwelling.
- (2) Make repairs to a dwelling in such poor condition that when the repairs are completed, the dwelling will continue to have major hazards.
- (3) Move a mobile home or manufactured home from one site to another.
- (4) Pay for off-site improvements except for the necessary installation and assessment costs for utilities.
- (5) Refinance any debt or obligation of the applicant incurred before the date of application, except for the installation and assessment costs of utilities.
- (6) Pay fees, commission, or charges to for-profit entities related to loan packaging or referral of prospective applicants to RHS.

§ 3550.103 Eligibility requirements.

To be eligible, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- (a) Owner-occupant. Applicants must own, as described in § 3550.107, and occupy the dwelling.
- (b) Age (grant only). To be eligible for grant assistance, an applicant must be 62 years of age or older at the time of application.
- (c) Income eligibility. At the time of loan or grant approval, the household's adjusted income must not exceed the applicable very low-income limit. Section 3550.54 provides a detailed discussion of the calculation of adjusted income.
- (d) Citizenship status. The applicant must be a U.S. citizen or a non-citizen who qualifies as a legal alien, as defined in § 3550.10.
- (e) Need and use of personal resources. Applicants must be unable to obtain financial assistance at reasonable terms and conditions from non-RHS credit or grant sources and lack the personal resources to meet their needs. In cases where the household is experiencing medical expenses in excess of three percent of the household's income, this requirement may be waived or modified. Elderly families must use any net family assets in excess of \$20,000 to reduce their section 504 request. Non-elderly families must use any net family assets in excess of \$15,000 to reduce their section 504 request. Applicants may contribute assets in excess of the aforementioned amounts to further reduce their request for assistance. The definition of assets for this purpose is net family assets as described in § 3550.54 of subpart B of this part, less the value of the dwelling and a minimum adequate site.
- (f) Legal capacity. The applicant must have the legal capacity to incur the loan obligation or have a court appointed guardian or conservator who is empowered to obligate the applicant in real estate matters.
- (g) Suspension or debarment. Applications from applicants who have been suspended or debarred from participation in federal programs will be handled in accordance with FmHA Instruction 1940-M (available in any Rural Development office).
- (h) Repayment ability (loans only). Applicants must demonstrate adequate repayment ability as supported by a budget.

(1) If an applicant does not meet the repayment ability requirements, the applicant can have another party join the application as a cosigner.

(2) If an applicant does not meet the repayment ability requirements, the applicant can have other household members join the application.

(i) Credit qualifications. Applicants must be unable to secure the necessary credit from other sources under terms and conditions that the applicant could reasonably be expected to fulfill. Loan applicants must have a credit history that indicates reasonable ability and willingness to meet debt obligations. An applicant with an outstanding judgment obtained by the United States in a federal court, other than the United States Tax Court is not eligible for a loan or grant from RHS.

(1) Indicators of unacceptable credit include:

(i) Payments on any account where the amount of the delinquency exceeded one installment for more than 30 days within the last 12 months.

(ii) Payments on any account which was delinquent for more than 30 days on two or more occasions within a 12-month period.

(iii) Loss of security due to a foreclosure if the foreclosure has been completed within the last 36 months.

(iv) An outstanding Internal Revenue Service tax lien or any other outstanding tax liens with no satisfactory arrangement for payment.

(v) A court-created or court-affirmed obligation or judgment caused by nonpayment that is currently outstanding or has been outstanding within the last 12 months, except for those excluded by paragraphs (i)(2)(i) and (i)(2)(ii) of this section.

(vi) Outstanding collection accounts with a record of irregular payment with no satisfactory arrangements for repayment, or collection accounts that were paid in full within the last 6 months.

(vii) Non-agency debts written off within the last 36 months or paid in full at least 12 months ago.

(viii) Agency debts that were debt settled within the last 36 months or are being considered for debt settlement.

(ix) Delinquency on a federal debt.

(2) The following will not be considered indicators of unacceptable credit:

(i) A bankruptcy in which debts were discharged more than 36 months prior to the date of application or where an applicant successfully completed a bankruptcy debt restructuring plan and has demonstrated a willingness to meet obligations when due for the 12 months prior to the date of application.

§ 3550.103 (i)(2) (Con.)

(ii) A non-foreclosure judgment satisfied more than 12 months before the date of application.

(3) When an application is rejected because of unacceptable credit, the applicant will be informed of the reason and source of information.

§ 3550.104 Applications.

(a) Application submissions. All persons applying for section 504 loans or grants must file a complete written application in a format specified by RHS. Applications will be accepted even when funds are not available.

(b) Application processing.

(1) Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant specifying in writing the additional information that is needed to make the application complete.

(2) An applicant may voluntarily withdraw an application at any time.

(3) RHS may periodically request in writing that applicants reconfirm their interest in obtaining a loan or grant. RHS may withdraw the application of any applicant who does not respond within the specified timeframe.

(4) Applicants who are eligible will be notified in writing. If additional information becomes available that indicates that the original eligibility determination may have been in error or that circumstances have changed, RHS may reconsider the application and the applicant may be required to submit additional information.

(5) Applicants who are ineligible will be notified in writing and provided with the specific reasons for the rejection.

(c) Processing priorities. When funding is not sufficient to serve all eligible applicants, applications for assistance to remove health and safety hazards will receive priority for funding. In the case of applications with equivalent priority status that are received on the same day, preference will be extended to applicants qualifying for a veterans preference. After selection for processing, requests for assistance are funded on a first-come, first-served basis.

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§ 3550.105 Site requirements.

(a) Rural areas. Loans may be made only in rural areas designated by RHS. If an area designation is changed to nonrural an existing RHS borrower may receive 504 assistance.

(b) Not subdividable. The site must not be large enough to subdivide into more than one site under existing local zoning ordinances.

§ 3550.106 Dwelling requirements.

(a) Modest dwelling. The property must be one that is considered modest for the area, must not be designed for income producing purposes, have an in-ground swimming pool, or have a market value in excess of the applicable maximum loan limit, in accordance with § 3550.63.

(b) Post-repair condition. Dwellings repaired with section 504 funds need not be brought to the agency development standards of 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A, nor must all existing hazards be removed. However, the dwelling may not continue to have major health or safety hazards.

(c) Construction standards. All work must be completed in accordance with local construction codes and standards. When potentially hazardous equipment or materials are being installed, all materials and installations must be in accordance with the applicable standards in 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A.

§ 3550.107 Ownership requirements.

The applicant must have an acceptable ownership interest in the property as evidenced by one of the following:

(a) Full fee ownership. Acceptable full fee ownership is evidenced by a fully marketable title with a deed vesting a fee interest in the property to the applicant.

(b) Secure leasehold interest. A written lease is required. For loans, the unexpired portion of the lease must not be less than 2 years beyond the term of the promissory note. For grants, the remaining lease period must be at least 5 years. A leasehold for mutual help housing financed by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on Indian lands requires no minimum lease period and constitutes acceptable ownership.

§ 3550.107 (Con.)

(c) Life estate interest. To be acceptable, a life estate interest must provide the applicant with rights of present possession, control, and beneficial use of the property. For secured loans, generally persons with any remainder interests must be signatories to the mortgage. All of the remainder interests need not be included in the mortgage to the extent that one or more of the persons holding remainder interests are not legally competent (and there is no representative who can legally consent to the mortgage), cannot be located, or if the remainder interests are divided among such a large number of people that it is not practical to obtain the signatures of all of the remainder interests. In such cases, the loan may not exceed the value of the property interests owned by the persons executing the mortgage.

(d) Undivided interest. An undivided interest is acceptable if there is no reason to believe that the applicant's position as an owner-occupant will be jeopardized as a result of the improvements to be made, and:

(1) In the case of unsecured loans or grants, if any co-owners living or planning to live in the dwelling sign the repayment agreement.

(2) In the case of a secured loan, when one or more of the co-owners are not legally competent (and there is no representative who can legally consent to the mortgage), cannot be located, or the ownership interests are divided among so large a number of co-owners that it is not practical for all of their interests to be mortgaged, their interests not exceeding 50 percent may be excluded from the security requirements. In such cases, the loan may not exceed the value of the property interests owned by the persons executing the mortgage.

(e) Possessory rights. Acceptable forms of ownership include possessory right on an American Indian reservation or State-owned land and the interest of an American Indian in land held severally under trust patents or deeds containing restrictions against alienation, provided that land in trust or restricted status will remain in trust or restricted status.

(f) Land purchase contract. A land purchase contract is acceptable if the applicant is current on all payments, and there is a reasonable likelihood that the applicant will be able to continue meeting the financial obligations of the contract.

(g) Alternative evidence of ownership. If evidence, as described in paragraphs (a) through (e) of this section, is not available, RHS may accept any of the following as evidence of ownership:

(1) Records of the local taxing authority that show the applicant as owner and that demonstrate that real estate taxes for the property are paid by the applicant.

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§ 3550.107 (g) (Con.)

(2) Affidavits by others in the community stating that the applicant has occupied the property as the apparent owner for a period of not less than 10 years, and is generally believed to be the owner.

(3) Any instrument, whether or not recorded, which is commonly accepted as evidence of ownership.

§ 3550.108 Security requirements (loans only).

When the total section 504 indebtedness is \$7,500 or more, the property will be secured by a mortgage on the property, leasehold interest, or land purchase contract.

(a) RHS does not require a first lien position, but the total of all debts on the secured property may not exceed the value of the security, except by the amount of any required contributions to an escrow account for taxes and insurance and any required appraisal fee.

(b) Title clearance and the use of legal services generally must be conducted in accordance with 7 CFR part 1927, subpart B. These requirements need not be followed for:

(1) Loans where the total RHS indebtedness is less than \$7,500; or

(2) Subsequent loans made for minimal essential repairs necessary to protect the Government's interest.

§ 3550.109 Escrow account (loans only).

RHS may require that borrowers deposit into an escrow account amounts necessary to ensure that the account will contain sufficient funds to pay real estate taxes, hazard and flood insurance premiums, and other related costs when they are due in accordance with the Real Estate Settlement and Procedures Act of 1974 (RESPA) and section 501(e) of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended.

§ 3550.110 Insurance (loans only).

(a) Borrower responsibility. Any borrower with a secured indebtedness in excess of \$15,000 at the time of loan approval must furnish and continually maintain hazard insurance on the security property, with companies, in amounts, and on terms and conditions acceptable to RHS including a "loss payable clause" payable to RHS to protect the Government's interest.

(b) Amount. The borrower is required to insure the dwelling and any other essential buildings in an amount equal to the insurable value of the dwelling and other essential buildings. However, in cases where the borrower's outstanding secured indebtedness is less than the insurable value of the dwelling and other essential buildings, the borrower may elect a lower coverage provided it is not less than the outstanding secured

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indebtedness. If the borrower fails, or is unable, to insure the secured property, RHS will force place insurance and charge the cost to the borrower's account. Force place insurance only provides insurance coverage to the Agency and does not provide any direct coverage or benefit to the borrower. The amount of the lender-placed coverage generally will be the property's last known insured value.

(c) Flood insurance. Flood insurance must be obtained and maintained for the life of the loan for all property located in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). RHS actions will be consistent with 7 CFR part 1806, subpart B which addresses flood insurance requirements. If flood insurance through FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program is not available in a SFHA, the property is not eligible for federal financial assistance.

(d) Losses.

(1) Loss deductible clauses for required insurance coverage may not exceed the generally accepted minimums based on current industry standards and local market conditions.

(2) Borrowers must immediately notify RHS of any loss or damage to insured property and collect the amount of the loss from the insurance company.

(3) RHS may require that loss payments be supervised. All repairs and replacements done by or under the direction of the borrower, or by contract, will be planned, performed, inspected, and paid for in accordance with 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A.

(4) When insurance funds remain after all repairs, replacements, and other authorized disbursements have been made, the funds will be applied in the following order:

(i) Prior liens, including delinquent property taxes.

(ii) Delinquency on the account.

(iii) Advances due for recoverable cost items.

(iv) Released to the borrower if the RHS debt is adequately secured.

(5) If a loss occurs when insurance is not in force, the borrower is responsible for making the needed repairs or replacements and ensuring that the insurance is reinstated on the property.

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§ 3550.110 (d) (Con.)

(6) If the borrower is not financially able to make the repairs, RHS may take one of the following actions:

- (i) Make a subsequent loan for repairs.
- (ii) Subordinate the RHS lien to permit the borrower to obtain funds for needed repairs from another source.
- (iii) Permit the borrower to obtain funds secured by a junior lien from another source.
- (iv) Make a protective advance to protect the Government's interest.
- (v) Accelerate the account and demand payment in full.

§ 3550.111 Appraisals (loans only).

An appraisal is required when the section 504 debt to be secured exceeds \$15,000 or whenever RHS determines that it is necessary to establish the adequacy of the security. RHS may charge an appraisal fee. Appraisals must be made in accordance with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices. When other real estate is taken as additional security it will be appraised if it represents a substantial portion of the security for the loan.

§ 3550.112 Maximum loan and grant.

(a) Maximum loan permitted. The sum of all outstanding section 504 loans to 1 borrower or on 1 dwelling may not exceed \$20,000.

(1) Transferees who have assumed a section 504 loan and wish to obtain a subsequent section 504 loan are limited to the difference between the unpaid principal balance of the debt assumed and \$20,000.

(2) For a secured loan, the total of all debts on the secured property may not exceed the value of the security, except by the amount of any required appraisal and tax monitoring fees, and the contributions to an escrow account for taxes and insurance.

(b) Maximum loan based upon ability to pay. The maximum loan is limited to the principal balance that can be supported given the amount the applicant has available, as determined by RHS, to repay a loan at 1 percent interest with a 20-year term.

(c) Maximum grant. The lifetime total of the grant assistance to any recipient is \$7,500. No grant can be awarded unless the maximum level of loans, as supported by a budget, have been obtained.

§ 3550.113 Rates and terms (loans only).

- (a) Interest rate. The interest rate for all section 504 loans will be 1 percent.
- (b) Loan term. The repayment period for the loan should generally be as short as possible based on the applicant's repayment ability, and may never exceed 20 years; however loans made in combination with grants must have a term of 20 years.

§ 3550.114 Repayment agreement (grants only).

Grant recipients are required to sign a repayment agreement which specifies that the full amount of the grant must be repaid if the property is sold in less than 3 years from the date the grant agreement was signed.

§ 3550.115 WWD grant program objectives.

The objective of the WWD individual grant program is to facilitate the use of community water and waste disposal systems by the residents of colonias along the border between the U.S. and Mexico. WWD grants are processed the same as Section 504 grants, except as specified in this subpart.

§ 3550.116 Definitions applicable to WWD grants only.

- (a) Colonia. Any identifiable community designated in writing by the State or county in which it is located; determined to be a colonia on the basis of objective criteria including lack of a potable water supply, lack of adequate sewage systems, and lack of decent, safe, and sanitary housing, inadequate roads, and drainage; and existed and was generally recognized as a colonia before October 1, 1989.
- (b) Individual. Resident of a colonia located in a rural area.
- (c) Rural areas. Includes unincorporated areas and any city or town with a population not in excess of 10,000 inhabitants according to the most recent decennial census of the United States.
- (d) System. A community or central water supply or waste disposal system.
- (e) WWD. Water and Waste Disposal grants to individuals.

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§ 3550.117 WWD grant purposes.

Grant funds may be used to pay the reasonable costs for individuals to:

- (a) Extend service lines from the system to their residence.
- (b) Connect service lines to residence's plumbing.
- (c) Pay reasonable charges or fees for connecting to a system.
- (d) Pay for necessary installation of plumbing and related fixtures within dwellings lacking such facilities. This is limited to one bath tub, sink, commode, kitchen sink, water heater, and outside spigot.
- (e) Construction and/or parting off a portion of the dwelling for a bathroom, not to exceed 4.6 square meters (48 square feet) in size.
- (f) Pay reasonable costs for closing abandoned septic tanks and water wells when necessary to protect the health and safety of recipients of a grant for a purpose provided in paragraph (a) or (b) of this section and is required by local or State law.
- (g) Make improvements to individual's residence when needed to allow the use of the water and/or waste disposal system.

§ 3550.118 Grant restrictions.

(a) Maximum grant. Lifetime assistance to any individual for initial or subsequent Section 306C WWD grants may not exceed a cumulative total of \$5,000.

(b) Limitation on use of grant funds. WWD grant funds may not be used to:

- (1) Pay any debt or obligation of the grantees other than obligations incurred for purposes listed in § 3550.117.
- (2) Pay individuals for their own labor.

§ 3550.119 WWD eligibility requirements.

In addition to the eligibility requirements of § 3550.103, WWD applicants must meet the following requirements:

- (a) An applicant need not be 62 years of age or older.

§ 3550.119 (Con.)

(b) Own and occupy a dwelling located in a colonia. Evidence of ownership will be presented as outlined in § 3550.107.

(c) Have a total taxable income from all individuals residing in the household that is below the most recent poverty income guidelines established by the Department of Health and Human Services.

(d) Must not be delinquent on any Federal debt.

(e) The household income must be verified at the time they apply for assistance through verification of employment and benefits. Federal tax returns are used as further verification of household income.

§§ 3550.120 - 3550.149 [Reserved]

§ 3550.150 OMB control number.

The information collection requirements contained in this regulation have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and have been assigned OMB control number 0575-0172. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to vary from 5 minutes to 3 hours per response, with an average of 1 1/2 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. You are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Subpart D - Regular Servicing

§ 3550.151 Servicing goals.

This subpart sets forth the Rural Housing Service (RHS) policies for managing the repayment of loans made under sections 502 and 504 of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended.

7 CFR Part 3550

§ 3550.152 Loan payments.

(a) Payment terms. Unless the loan documents specify other loan repayment terms, borrowers are required to make monthly payments. Borrowers with existing loans specifying annual payments may request conversion to monthly payments, and must convert to a monthly payment schedule before any subsequent loan or new payment assistance is approved. Suitable forms of payment are: check, money order, or bank draft. Borrowers who make cash payments will be assessed a fee to cover the cost of conversion to a money order.

(b) Application of payments. If a borrower makes less than the scheduled payment, the payment is held in suspense and is not applied to the borrower's account. When subsequent payments are received in an amount sufficient to equal a scheduled payment, the amount will be applied in the following order:

- (1) Protective advances charged to the account.
- (2) Accrued interest due.
- (3) Principal due.
- (4) Escrow for taxes and insurance.

(c) Multiple loans. When a borrower with multiple loans for the same property makes less than the scheduled payment on all loans, the payment will be applied to the oldest loan and then in declining order of age. Future remittances will be applied beginning with the oldest unpaid installment.

(d) Application of excess payments. Borrowers can elect to make payments in excess of the scheduled amount to be applied to principal, provided there are no outstanding fees.

§ 3550.153 Fees.

RHS may assess reasonable fees including a tax service fee, fees for late payments, and fees for checks returned for insufficient funds.

§ 3550.154 Inspections.

RHS or its agent may make reasonable entries upon and inspections of any property used as security for an RHS loan as necessary to protect the interest of the Government. RHS will give the borrower notice at the time of or prior to an inspection.

§ 3550.155 Escrow account.

Escrow accounts will be administered in accordance with RESPA and section 501(e) of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended.

- (a) Upon creation of the escrow account, RHS may require borrowers to deposit funds sufficient to pay taxes and insurance premiums applicable to the mortgage for the period since the last payments were made and to fund a cushion as permitted by RESPA.
- (b) Borrowers may elect to escrow at any time during the terms of the loan if the outstanding RHS loan balance is over \$2,500.
- (c) RHS may require borrowers to escrow in conjunction with any special servicing action.

§ 3550.156 Borrower obligations.

- (a) After receiving a loan from RHS, borrowers are expected to meet a variety of obligations outlined in the loan documents. In addition to making timely payments, these obligations include:
 - (1) Maintaining the security property, and
 - (2) Maintaining an adequately funded escrow account, or paying real estate taxes, hazard and flood insurance, and other related costs when due.
- (b) If a borrower fails to fulfill these obligations, RHS may obtain the needed service and charge the cost to the borrower's account.

§ 3550.157 Payment subsidy.

- (a) Borrowers currently receiving payment subsidy.
 - (1) RHS will review annually each borrower's eligibility for continued payment subsidy and determine the appropriate level of assistance. To be eligible for payment subsidy renewal, the borrower must also occupy the property.
 - (2) If the renewal is not completed before the expiration date of the existing agreement, the effective date of the renewal will be either the expiration date of the previous agreement if RHS error caused the delay, or the next due date after the renewal is approved in all other cases.

7 CFR Part 3550
§ 3550.157 (a) (Con.)

(3) The borrower must notify RHS whenever an adult member of the household becomes employed or changes employment, there is a change in household composition, or if income increases by at least 10 percent. The household may also report decreases in income. If the change in the household's income will cause the payment for principal and interest to change by at least 10 percent, the household's payment subsidy may be adjusted for a new 12-month period. The new agreement will be effective the due date following the date the borrower's information is verified by RHS.

(b) Borrowers not currently receiving payment subsidy. Payment assistance may be granted to borrowers not currently receiving payment subsidy whose loans were approved on or after August 1, 1968, whose income does not exceed the applicable low-income limit for the area, are personally occupying the RHS financed property, and meet the requirements of § 3550.53 (b), (e), and (f). In general, to receive payment assistance the term of the loan at closing must have been at least 25 years. If an account has been reamortized and the initial term of the loan was at least 25 years, payment assistance may be granted even though the term of the reamortized loan is less than 25 years. Payment assistance may be granted on a subsequent loan for repairs with a term of less than 25 years.

(c) Cancellation of payment subsidy. RHS will cancel a payment subsidy if the borrower does not occupy the property, has sold or transferred title to the property, or is no longer eligible for payment subsidy.

§ 3550.158 Active military duty.

The Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act requires that the interest rate charged a borrower who enters full-time active military duty after a loan is closed not exceed six percent. Active military duty does not include participation in a military reserve or the National Guard unless the borrower is called to active duty.

(a) Amount of assistance. If a borrower qualifies for payment subsidy after reduction of the interest rate to six percent, the amount of payment subsidy received during the period of active military duty will be the difference between the amount due at the subsidized rate for principal and interest and the amount due at a six percent interest rate. The six percent interest rate will be effective with the first payment due after RHS confirms the active military status of the borrower.

(b) Change of active military status. The borrower must notify RHS when he or she is no longer on active military duty. RHS will cancel the six percent interest rate and resume use of the promissory note interest rate. A new payment subsidy agreement may be processed if the borrower is eligible.

§ 3550.159 Borrower actions requiring RHS approval.

(a) Mineral leases. Borrowers who wish to lease mineral rights to a security property must request authorization from RHS. RHS may consent to the lease of mineral rights and subordinate its liens to the lessee's rights and interests in the mineral activity if the security property will remain suitable as a residence and the Government's security interest will not be adversely affected. Subordination of RHS loans to a mineral lease does not entitle the leaseholder to any proceeds from the sale of the security property.

(1) If the proposed activity is likely to decrease the value of the security property, RHS may consent to the lease only if the borrower assigns 100 percent of the income from the lease to RHS to be applied to reduce principal and the rent to be paid is at least equal to the estimated decrease in the market value of the security.

(2) If the proposed activity is not likely to decrease the value of the security property, RHS may consent to the lease if the borrower agrees to use any damage compensation received from the lessee to repair damage to the site or dwelling, or to assign it to RHS to be applied to reduce principal.

(b) Subordination. RHS may subordinate its interests to permit a borrower to defer recapture amounts and refinance the loan, or to obtain a subsequent loan with private credit.

(1) When it is in the best interest of the Government, subordination will be permitted if:

(i) The other lender will verify that the funds will be used for purposes for which an RHS loan could be made,

(ii) The prior lien debt will be on terms and conditions that the borrower can reasonably be expected to meet without jeopardizing repayment of the RHS indebtedness,

(iii) Any proposed development will be planned and performed in accordance with 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A or directed by the other lender in a manner which is consistent with that subpart, and

(iv) An agreement is obtained in writing from the prior lienholder providing that at least 30 days prior written notice will be given to RHS before action to foreclose on the prior lien is initiated.

7 CFR Part 3550
§ 3550.159 (b) (Con.)

(2) The total amount of debt permitted when RHS subordinates its interests depends on whether the borrower pays off the RHS loan.

(i) For situations in which the borrower is obtaining a subsequent loan from another source and will not pay off the RHS debt, the prior lien debt plus the unpaid balance of all RHS loans, exclusive of recapture, will not exceed the market value of the security.

(ii) For situations in which RHS is subordinating only a deferred recapture amount, the prior lien debt plus the deferred recapture amount will not exceed the market value of the security.

(c) Partial release of security. RHS may consent to transactions affecting the security, such as sale or exchange of security property or granting of a right-of-way across the security property, and grant a partial release provided:

(1) The compensation is:

(i) For sale of the security property, cash in an amount equal to the value of the security being disposed of or rights granted.

(ii) For exchange of security property, another parcel of property acquired in exchange with value equal to or greater than that being disposed of.

(iii) For granting an easement or right-of-way, benefits derived that are equal to or greater than the value of the security property being disposed of.

(2) An appraisal must be conducted if the latest appraisal is more than 1 year old or if it does not reflect market value and the amount of consideration exceeds \$5,000. The appraisal fee will be charged to the borrower.

(3) The security property, after the transaction is completed, will be an adequate but modest, decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling and related facilities.

(4) Repayment of the RHS debt will not be jeopardized.

(5) If applicable, the environmental requirements of 7 CFR part 1940, subpart G are met.

(6) When exchange of all or part of the security is involved, title clearance are obtained before release of the existing security.

§ 3550.159 (c) (Con.)

(7) Proceeds from the sale of a portion of the security property, granting an easement or right-of-way, damage compensation, and all similar transactions requiring RHS consent, will be used in the following order:

(i) To pay customary and reasonable costs related to the transaction that must be paid by the borrower.

(ii) To be applied on a prior lien debt, if any.

(iii) To be applied to RHS indebtedness or used for improvements to the security property in keeping with purposes and limitations applicable for use of RHS loan funds. Proposed development will be planned and performed in accordance with 7 CFR part 1924, subpart A and supervised to ensure that the proceeds are used as planned.

(d) Lease of security property. A borrower must notify RHS if they lease the property. If the lease is for a term of more than 3 years or contains an option to purchase, RHS may liquidate the loan. During the period of any lease, the borrower is not eligible for a payment subsidy or special servicing benefits.

§ 3550.160 Refinancing with private credit.

(a) Objective. RHS direct loan programs are not intended to supplant or compete with private credit sources. Therefore, borrowers are required to refinance RHS loans with private credit sources when RHS determines that the borrower meets RHS criteria.

(b) Criteria for refinancing with private credit. Borrowers must refinance with private credit when RHS determines that the borrower has the ability to obtain other credit at reasonable rates and terms based on their income, assets, and credit history. Reasonable rates and terms are those commercial rates and terms that borrowers are expected to meet when borrowing for similar purposes. Differences in interest rates and terms between RHS and other lenders will not be an acceptable reason for a borrower to fail to refinance with private credit if the available rates and terms are within the borrower's ability to pay.

(c) Notice of requirement to refinance with private credit. The financial status of all borrowers may be reviewed periodically to determine their ability to refinance with private credit. A borrower's financial status may be reviewed at any time if information becomes available to RHS that indicates that the borrower's circumstances have changed.

7 CFR Part 3550
§ 3550.160 (c) (Con.)

(1) A borrower undergoing review is required to supply, within 30 days of a request from RHS, sufficient financial information to enable RHS to determine the borrower's ability to refinance with private credit. Foreclosure action may be initiated against any borrower who fails to respond.

(2) When RHS determines that a borrower has the ability to refinance with private credit, the borrower will be required to refinance within 90 days.

(3) Within 30 days after being notified of the requirement to refinance with private credit, a borrower may contest the RHS decision and provide additional financial information to document an inability to refinance with private credit.

(d) Failure to refinance with private credit.

(1) If the borrower is unable to secure private credit, the borrower must submit written statements and documentation to RHS showing:

(i) The lenders contacted.

(ii) The amount of the loan requested by the borrower and the amount, if any, offered by the lenders.

(iii) The rates and terms offered by the lenders or the specific reasons why other credit is not available.

(iv) The information provided by the borrower to the lenders regarding the purpose of the loan.

(2) If RHS determines that the borrower's submission does not demonstrate the borrower's inability to refinance with private credit, or if the borrower fails to submit the required information, foreclosure may be initiated.

(e) Subordination of recapture amount. RHS may subordinate its interest in any deferred recapture amount to permit a borrower to refinance with private credit. The amount to which the RHS debt will be subordinated may include:

(1) The amount required to repay the RHS debt, exclusive of recapture,

(2) Reasonable closing costs,

§ 3550.160 (e) (Con.)

(3) Up to one percent of the loan amount for loan servicing costs, if required by the lender, and

(4) The cost of any necessary repairs or improvements to the security property.

(f) Application for additional credit. A borrower who has been asked to refinance with private credit will not be considered for additional credit until the refinancing issue is resolved unless such additional credit is necessary to protect the Government's interest.

§ 3550.161 Final payment.

(a) Payment in full. Full payment of a borrower's account includes repayment of principal and outstanding interest, unauthorized assistance, recapture amounts, and charges made to the borrower's account. Any supervised funds or funds remaining in a borrower's escrow account will be applied to the borrower's account or returned to the borrower.

(b) Release of security instruments. RHS may release security instruments when full payment of all amounts owed has been received and verified. If RHS and the borrower agree to settle the account for less than the full amount owed, the security instruments may be released when all agreed-upon amounts are received and verified. Security instruments will not be released until any deferred recapture amount has been paid in full.

(c) Payoff statements. At the borrower's request, RHS will provide a written statement indicating the amount required to pay the account in full. RHS may charge a fee for statements for the same account if more than 2 statements are requested in any 30 day period.

(d) Suitable forms of payment. Suitable forms of payment are: check, money order, or bank draft. Borrowers who make cash payments will be assessed a fee to cover conversion to a money order.

(e) Recording costs. Recording costs for the release of the mortgage will be the responsibility of the borrower, except where State law requires the mortgagee to record or file the satisfaction.

§ 3550.162 Recapture.

(a) Recapture policy. Borrowers with loans approved or assumed on or after October 1, 1979, will be required to repay subsidy amounts received through payment subsidy or deferred mortgage assistance. Amounts to be recaptured are due and payable when the borrower transfers title or ceases to occupy the property.

(b) Amount to be recaptured.

(1) The maximum amount to be recaptured is the amount of principal reduction attributed to subsidy and the lesser of:

- (i) the amount of subsidy received, or
- (ii) 50 percent of the value appreciation.

(2) The value appreciation of a property with a cross-collateralized loan is based on the market value of the dwelling and lot. If located on a farm, the lot size would be a typical lot for a single family housing property.

(3) Interest reduced from the promissory note rate to six percent under the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act is not subject to recapture.

(c) Option to defer payment of recapture amounts.

(1) Borrowers may defer payment of recapture amounts if the loan is repaid, the title does not transfer, and the borrower continues to occupy the property.

(2) The RHS mortgage securing the deferred recapture amount may be subordinated to permit refinancing if the RHS mortgage will be adequately secured.

(3) Borrowers eligible to defer recapture may receive a discount on the recapture amount due if the recapture amount is paid along with the final payment, or in the case of a final installment, within 60 days of the date RHS notifies the borrower that recapture may be due.

(d) Borrower ceases to occupy the property. When a borrower ceases to occupy a property:

(1) The borrower may pay the recapture amount in full or reamortize the existing loan to include the recapture amount.

(2) If the borrower does not pay the recapture amount or consent to reamortization within 30 days, RHS may proceed with foreclosure.

(e) Assumed loans.

(1) When a loan subject to recapture is assumed under new rates and terms, the recapture amount may be paid in full by the seller or included in the principal amount assumed by the buyer.

§ 3550.162 (e) (Con.)

(2) When a loan is assumed under the terms of the promissory note, recapture amounts will not be due. When the new borrower transfers title or ceases to occupy the property, all subsidy subject to recapture before and after the assumption is due.

(3) When a borrower has deferred payment of recapture amounts, the deferred recapture amount may be included in the principal amount of the new loan.

§ 3550.163 Transfer of security and assumption of indebtedness.

(a) General policy. RHS mortgages contain due-on-sale clauses that generally require RHS consent before title to a security property can be transferred with an assumption of the indebtedness. If it is in the best interest of the Government, RHS will approve the transfer of title and assumption of indebtedness on program or nonprogram (NP) terms, depending on the transferee's eligibility and the property's characteristics.

(b) RHS approval of assumptions.

(1) A borrower with a loan on program terms who wishes to transfer a security property restricted by a due-on-sale clause to a purchaser who wishes to assume the debt must receive prior authorization from RHS. If RHS authorizes the transfer and assumption, the account will be serviced in the purchaser's name and the purchaser will be liable for the loan under the terms of the security instrument.

(2) If a borrower transfers title to the security property with a due-on-sale clause without obtaining RHS authorization, RHS will not approve assumption of the indebtedness, and the loan will be liquidated unless RHS determines that it is in the Government's best interest to continue the loan. If RHS decides to continue the loan, the account will be serviced in the original borrower's name and the original borrower will remain liable for the loan under the terms of the security instrument.

(c) Exceptions to due-on-sale clauses.

(1) Due-on-sale clauses are not triggered by the following types of transfers:

(i) A transfer from the borrower to a spouse or children not resulting from the death of the borrower.

(ii) A transfer to a relative, joint tenant, or tenant by the entirety resulting from the death of the borrower.

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§ 3550.163 (c)(1) (Con.)

(iii) A transfer to a spouse or ex-spouse resulting from a divorce decree, legal separation agreement, or property settlement agreement.

(iv) A transfer to a person other than a deceased borrower's spouse who wishes to assume the loan for the benefit of persons who were dependent on the deceased borrower at the time of death, if the dwelling will be occupied by one or more persons who were dependent on the borrower at the time of death, and there is a reasonable prospect of repayment.

(v) A transfer into an inter vivos trust in which the borrower does not transfer rights of occupancy in the property.

(2) A transferee who obtains property through one of the types of transfer listed in paragraph (c)(1) of this section:

(i) Is not required to assume the loan, and RHS is not permitted to liquidate the loan, if the transferee continues to make scheduled payments and meet all other obligations of the loan. A transferee who does not assume the loan is not eligible for payment assistance or a moratorium.

(ii) May assume the loan on the rates and terms contained in the promissory note, with no down payment. If the account is past due at the time an assumption is executed, the account may be brought current by using any of the servicing methods discussed in subpart E of this part.

(iii) May assume the loan under new rates and terms if the transferee applies and is program-eligible.

(3) Any subsequent transfer of title, except upon death of the inheritor or between inheritors to consolidate title, will be treated as a sale.

(d) Requirements for an assumption.

(1) Loans secured by program-eligible properties to be assumed by program-eligible purchasers may be assumed on program terms. Loans secured by nonprogram properties and loans to be assumed by purchasers who are not eligible for program terms may be assumed on NP terms.

(2) The amount the transferee will assume will be either the current market value less any prior liens and any required down payment, or the indebtedness, whichever is less.

§ 3550.163 (d) (Con.)

- (3) For loans assumed on program terms, the interest rate charged by RHS will be the rate in effect at loan approval or loan closing, whichever is lower. For loans assumed on nonprogram terms, the interest rate charged by RS will be the rate in effect at the time of loan approval.
- (4) If additional financing is required to purchase the property or to make repairs, RHS may approve a subsequent loan under subparts B or C of this part.
- (5) If an appraisal is required for an assumption on new terms, the purchaser is responsible for the appraisal fee.
- (6) If all or a portion of the borrower's account balance is assumed, the borrower and cosigner, if any, will be released from liability on the amount of the indebtedness assumed. If an account balance remains after the assumption, RHS may pursue debt settlement in accordance with subpart F of this part.
- (7) Unless it is in the Government's best interest, RHS will not approve an assumption of a secured loan if the seller fails to repay any unsecured RHS loan.
- (8) If a loan is secured by a property with a dwelling situated on more than a minimum adequate site and the excess property cannot be sold separately as a minimum adequate site for another dwelling, RHS may approve a transfer of the entire property. If the excess property can be sold separately as a minimum adequate site, RHS will approve assumption of only the dwelling and the minimum adequate site. If the value of the dwelling on the minimum adequate site is less than the amount of the outstanding RHS debt, the remaining debt will be secured by the excess property. The outstanding debt will be converted to an NP loan and reamortized over a period not to exceed 10 years or the final due date of the original promissory note, whichever is sooner.

§ 3550.164 Unauthorized assistance.

(a) Definition. Unauthorized assistance includes any loan, payment subsidy, deferred mortgage payment, or grant for which the recipient was not eligible.

(b) Unauthorized assistance due to false information.

- (1) False information includes information that the recipient knew was incorrect or should have known was incorrect that was provided or omitted for the purposes of obtaining assistance for which the recipient was not eligible.

(2) If the recipient receives an unauthorized loan due to false information, RHS will adjust the account using the NP interest rate that was in effect when the loan was approved. The recipient must pay the account in full within 30 days.

(3) If the recipient receives unauthorized subsidy due to false information, RHS will require the recipient to repay it within 30 days. The account cannot be reamortized to include the unauthorized subsidy. If the recipient repays the unauthorized subsidy, the loan may be continued.

(c) Unauthorized assistance due to inaccurate information.

(1) Inaccurate information includes incorrect information inadvertently provided, used, or omitted without the intent to obtain benefits for which the recipient was not eligible.

(2) RHS will permit a recipient who receives an unauthorized loan due to inaccurate information to retain the loan under the following conditions.

(i) If the inaccurate information was related to the purpose of the loan or the recipient's eligibility, with the exception of income, or the income used was incorrect, but the recipient still qualified as income-eligible, RHS will allow the recipient to continue the loan on existing terms.

(ii) If a section 502 recipient's income was above the moderate-income level, RHS will convert the loan to an NP loan, using the nonprogram interest rate in effect on the date the loan was approved.

(iii) If a section 504 recipient's income was above the very low-income level, RHS will apply the applicable 502 or nonprogram interest rate in effect on the date the loan was approved.

(iv) If an incorrect interest rate was used, RHS will adjust the account using the correct interest rate.

(3) If the recipient receives unauthorized subsidy due to inaccurate information, RHS will require the recipient to repay it within 30 days. If the recipient cannot repay it within 30 days, the account may be reamortized. If the recipient repays the unauthorized subsidy or reamortizes the loan, the loan may be continued.

§ 3550.164 (Con.)

(d) Unauthorized grants. Recipients may either repay the unauthorized assistance in a lump sum or execute a promissory note, regardless of whether the unauthorized assistance was due to false or inaccurate information. RHS may seek a judgment if the recipient refuses to repay the unauthorized assistance.

(e) Account servicing. RHS will adjust all accounts retroactively to establish the amount of unauthorized assistance. If the recipient does not repay the unauthorized assistance within 30 days, RHS may accelerate the loan. If the unauthorized assistance is due to inaccurate information and the recipient is unable to repay within 30 days, RHS may reamortize the loan.

(f) Accounts with no security. If an unauthorized loan or grant is unsecured, RHS may seek the best mortgage obtainable.

§§ 3550.165 - 3550.199 [Reserved]

§ 3550.200 OMB control number.

The information collection requirements contained in this regulation have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and have been assigned OMB control number 0575-0172. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to vary from 5 minutes to 3 hours per response, with an average of 1 1/2 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. You are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Subpart E - Special Servicing

§ 3550.201 Purpose of special servicing actions.

The Rural Housing Service (RHS) may approve special servicing actions to reduce the number of borrower failures that result in liquidation. Borrowers who have difficulty keeping their accounts current may be eligible for one or more available servicing options including: payment assistance; delinquency workout agreements that temporarily modify payment terms; protective advances of funds for taxes, insurance, and other approved costs; and payment moratoriums.

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§ 3550.202 Past due accounts.

An account is past due if the scheduled payment is not received by the due date.

(a) Late fee. A late fee will be assessed if the full scheduled payment is not received by the 15th day after the due date, or as authorized by State law.

(b) Liquidation.

(1) For borrowers with monthly payments. The account may be accelerated without further servicing when at least 3 scheduled payments are past due or an amount equal to at least 2 scheduled payments is past due for at least 3 consecutive months. In such cases RHS may pursue voluntary liquidation and foreclosure.

(2) For borrowers with annual payments. The account may be accelerated without further servicing when at least 3/12ths of 1 scheduled payment has not been received by its due date. In such cases, RHS may pursue voluntary liquidation and foreclosure.

§ 3550.203 General servicing actions.

Whenever any of the servicing actions described in this subpart result in reamortization of the account RHS may:

(a) Require a borrower who currently makes annual payments, but receives a monthly income, to convert to monthly payments.

(b) Require the creation and funding of an escrow account for real estate taxes and insurance, if one does not already exist for any borrower with monthly payments.

(c) Convert the method of calculating interest for any account being charged daily simple interest to an amortized payment schedule.

§ 3550.204 Payment assistance.

Borrowers who are eligible may be offered payment assistance in accordance with subpart B of this part. Borrowers who are not eligible for payment assistance because the loan was approved before August 1, 1968, or the loan was made on above-moderate or nonprogram (NP) terms, may refinance the loan in order to obtain payment assistance if:

(a) The borrower is eligible to receive a loan with payment assistance,

§ 3550.204 (Con.)

- (b) Due to circumstances beyond the borrower's control, the borrower is in danger of losing the property, and
- (c) The property is program-eligible.

§ 3550.205 Delinquency workout agreements.

Borrowers with past due accounts may be offered the opportunity to avoid liquidation by entering into a delinquency workout agreement that specifies a plan for bringing the account current. To receive a delinquency workout agreement, the following requirements apply:

- (a) A borrower who is able to do so will be required to pay the past-due amount in a single payment.
- (b) A borrower who is unable to pay the past-due amount in a single payment must pay monthly all scheduled payments plus an agreed upon additional amount that brings the account current within 2 years or the remaining term of the loan, whichever is shorter.
- (c) If a borrower becomes more than 30 days past due under the terms of a delinquency workout agreement, RHS may cancel the agreement.

§ 3550.206 Protective advances.

RHS may pay for fees or services and charge the cost against the borrower's account to protect the Government's interest.

- (a) Advances for taxes and insurance. RHS may advance funds to pay real estate taxes, hazard and flood insurance premiums, and other related costs, as well as amounts needed to fund the current escrow cycle.
- (b) Advances for costs other than taxes and insurance. Protective advances for costs other than taxes and insurance, such as emergency repairs, will be made only if the borrower cannot obtain a subsequent loan.
- (c) Repayment arrangements.
 - (1) Advances for borrowers with multiple loans will be charged against the largest loan.
 - (2) Amounts advanced will be due with the next scheduled payment. RHS may schedule repayment consistent with the borrower's ability to repay or reamortize the loan.
 - (3) Advances will bear interest at the promissory note rate of the loan to which the advance was charged.

§ 3550.207 Payment moratorium.

RHS may defer a borrower's scheduled payments for up to 2 years. NP borrowers are not eligible for a payment moratorium.

(a) Borrower eligibility. For a borrower to be eligible for a moratorium, all of the following conditions must be met:

(1) Due to circumstances beyond the borrower's control, the borrower is temporarily unable to continue making scheduled payments because:

(i) The borrower's repayment income fell by at least 20 percent within the past 12 months,

(ii) The borrower must pay unexpected and unreimbursed expenses resulting from the illness, injury, or death of the borrower or a family member, or

(iii) The borrower must pay unexpected and unreimbursed expenses resulting from damage to the security property in cases where adequate hazard insurance was not available or was prohibitively expensive.

(2) The borrower occupies the dwelling, unless RHS determines that it is uninhabitable.

(3) The borrower's account is not currently accelerated.

(b) Reviews of borrower eligibility.

(1) Periodically RHS may require the borrower to submit financial information to demonstrate that the moratorium should be continued. The moratorium may be canceled if:

(i) The borrower does not respond to a request for financial information,

(ii) RHS receives information indicating that the moratorium is no longer required, or

(iii) In the case of a moratorium granted to pay unexpected or unreimbursed expenses, the borrower cannot show that an amount at least equal to the deferred payments has been applied toward the expenses.

§ 3550.207(b) (Con.)

(2) At least 30 days before the moratorium is scheduled to expire, RHS will require the borrower to provide financial information needed to determine whether the borrower is able to resume making scheduled payments.

(c) Resumption of scheduled payments. When the borrower is able to resume scheduled payments, the loan will be reamortized to include the amount deferred during the moratorium and the borrower will be required to escrow. If the new monthly payment, after consideration of the maximum amount of payment subsidy available to the borrower, exceeds the borrower's repayment ability, all or part of the interest that has accrued during the moratorium may be forgiven.

(d) Borrowers unable to resume scheduled payments. If even after all appropriate servicing actions have been taken the borrower is unable to resume making scheduled payments after 2 consecutive years of being on a moratorium, the account will be liquidated.

§ 3550.208 Reamortization using promissory note interest rate.

Reamortization using the promissory note interest rate may be authorized when RHS determines that reamortization is required to enable the borrower to meet scheduled obligations, and only if the Government's lien priority is not adversely affected.

(a) Permitted uses. Reamortization at the promissory note interest rate may be used to accomplish a variety of servicing actions, including to:

- (1) Repay unauthorized assistance due to inaccurate information.
- (2) Repay principal and interest accrued and advances made during a moratorium.
- (3) Bring current an account under a delinquency workout agreement after the borrower has demonstrated the willingness and ability to meet the terms of the loan and delinquency workout agreement and reamortization is in the borrower's and Government's best interests.
- (4) Bring a delinquent account current in the case of an assumption where the due on sale clause is not triggered as described in § 3550.163(c).
- (5) Cover the remaining debt when a portion of the security property is being transferred but the acquisition price does not cover the outstanding debt. The remaining balance will be reamortized for a period not to exceed 10 years or the final due date of the note being reamortized, whichever is sooner.

7 CFR Part 3550
§ 3550.208 (a) (Con.)

(6) Bring an account current where the National Appeals Division (NAD) reverses an adverse action, the borrower has adequate repayment ability, and RHS determines the reamortization is in the best interests of the Government and the borrower.

(b) Payment term of reamortized loan. Except as noted in paragraph (a)(5) of this section, the term of the reamortized loan may be extended to the maximum term for which the borrower was eligible at the time the loan was originally made, less the number of years the loan has been outstanding. In all cases, the term must not exceed the remaining security life of the property.

§ 3550.209 [Reserved]

§ 3550.210 Offsets.

Any money that is or may become payable from the United States to an RHS borrower may be subject to administrative, salary, or Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offsets for the collection of a debt owed to RHS.

(a) IRS offset. RHS may take action to effect offset of claims due RHS against tax refunds due to RHS debtors under 31 U.S.C. 3720a and 31 CFR 285.2.

(b) Salary offset. Offset of claims due to RHS may be collected pursuant to the salary offset provisions in 7 CFR part 3, subpart C for a federal employee or other persons covered in that subpart.

(c) Administrative offset. RHS may take action to effect administrative offset to recover delinquent claims due to it in accordance with the procedures in 7 CFR part 3, subpart B.

(d) Offset by other federal agencies. Escrow funds and loan and grant funds held or payable by RHS are not subject to offset by other federal agencies.

§ 3550.211 Liquidation.

(a) Policy. When RHS determines that a borrower is unable or unwilling to meet loan obligations, RHS may accelerate the loan and, if necessary, acquire the security property. The borrower is responsible for all expenses associated with liquidation and acquisition. If the account is satisfied in full, the borrower will be released from liability. RHS may pursue any deficiency unless the borrower received a moratorium at any time during the life of the loan and faithfully tried to repay the loan.

§ 3550.211 (Con.)

(b) Tribal allotted or trust land. Liquidations involving a security interest in tribal allotted or trust land shall only be pursued after offering to transfer the account to an eligible tribal member, the tribe, or the Indian Housing Authority. Forced liquidation of RHS security interests in Indian trust lands or on tribal allotted land will be recommended only after the State Director has determined it is in the best interest of the Government.

(c) Acceleration and foreclosure. If RHS determines that foreclosure is in the best interest of the Government, RHS will send an acceleration notice to each borrower and any cosigner.

(d) Voluntary liquidation. After acceleration, borrowers may voluntarily liquidate through:

(1) Refinancing or sale. The borrower may refinance or sell the security property for at least net recovery value and apply the proceeds to the account.

(2) Deed in lieu of foreclosure. RHS may accept a deed in lieu of foreclosure to convey title to the security property only after the debt has been accelerated and when it is in the Government's best interest.

(3) Offer by third party. If a junior lienholder or cosigner makes an offer in the amount of at least the net recovery value, RHS may assign the note and mortgage.

(e) Bankruptcy.

(1) When a petition in bankruptcy is filed by a borrower after acceleration, collection actions and foreclosure actions are suspended in accordance with the provisions of the Bankruptcy Code.

(2) RHS may accept conveyance of security property by the trustee in bankruptcy if the Bankruptcy Court has approved the transaction, RHS determines the conveyance is in the best interest of the Government, and RHS will acquire title free of all liens and encumbrances except RHS liens.

(3) Whenever possible in a Chapter 7 Bankruptcy, a reaffirmation agreement will be signed by the borrower and approved by the court prior to discharge, if RHS decides to continue with the borrower.

(f) Junior lienholder foreclosure. When a junior lienholder foreclosure does not result in payment in full of the RHS debt but the property is sold subject to the RHS lien, RHS may liquidate the account unless the new owner is eligible to assume the RHS debt and actually assumes the RHS debt.

(g) Payment subsidy. If the borrower is receiving payment subsidy, the payment subsidy agreement will not be canceled when the debt is accelerated, but will not be renewed unless the account is reinstated.

7 CFR Part 3550
§ 3550.211 (Con.)

(h) Eligibility for special servicing actions. A borrower is not eligible for special servicing actions once the account has been accelerated.

(i) Reporting. RHS may report to IRS and credit reporting agencies any debt settled through liquidation.

§§ 3550.212 - 3550.249 [Reserved]

§ 3550.250 OMB control number.

The information collection requirements contained in this regulation have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and have been assigned OMB control number 0575-0172. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to vary from 5 minutes to 3 hours per response, with an average of 1 1/2 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. You are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Subpart F - Post-Servicing Actions

§ 3550.251 Property management and disposition.

(a) Policy. Rural Housing Service (RHS) will manage custodial property and Real Estate Owned (REO) property to protect the Government's interest, and may dispose of REO property through direct sales, sealed bid, or auction. RHS will follow affirmative fair housing marketing policies.

(b) Custodial property. RHS may take custodial possession of security property that has been abandoned, or for other reasons necessary to protect the Government's security. After taking custodial possession of a security property, RHS may maintain and repair the security property as needed to protect the Government's interest, pay required real estate taxes and assessments, and secure personal property left on the premises. Expenses will be charged to the borrower's account. Custodial property may be leased when it is in the Government's best interest and in such cases the borrower's account will be credited for income from the security property.

(c) REO property.

(1) Classification. When RHS takes title to a security property, it is classified as either program or nonprogram (NP) property. An REO property that is eligible for financing under the section 502 program, or which could reasonably be repaired to be eligible, is classified as program property. An REO property that cannot reasonably be repaired to be eligible as section 502 property, and property that has been improved to a point that it will no longer qualify as modest under section 502, is classified as NP property.

(2) Disclosing decent, safe, and sanitary defects. When RHS determines that an REO property to be sold is not decent, safe, and sanitary, or does not meet cost-effective energy conservation standards, it will disclose the reasons why. The deed by which such an REO property is conveyed will contain a covenant restricting it from residential use until it is decent, safe, and sanitary and meets the RHS cost-effective energy conservation standards. RHS will also notify any potential purchaser of any known lead-based paint hazards.

(3) Property on Indian tribal allotted or trust land. REO property which is located on Indian tribal allotted or trust land, will be sold or otherwise disposed of only to a member of the particular tribe having jurisdiction over the allotted or tribal land, to the tribe, or to an Indian housing authority serving the tribe on a first-come, first-served basis.

(4) Reservation of program REO properties.

(i) Program REO properties are reserved for eligible direct or guaranteed single family housing loans under this part or part 1980, subpart D of this title and nonprofit organizations or public bodies providing transitional housing during the first 60 days after the date of the first notice of sale, and during the first 30 days following any reduction in price or any other change in credit terms or other sale terms. After the expiration of a reservation period, program REO properties can be bought by any buyer.

(ii) An offer on a program REO property from a buyer who does not qualify for a direct or guaranteed single family housing loan may be submitted during a reservation period, but is considered to have been received on the day after the reservation period ends.

(iii) No offer is considered until 3 business days after the date the property is offered for sale. An offer received during the 3-day holding period is not considered until the 4th day, and is evaluated with any other offers actually received on the 4th day.

(5) Priority of offers received the same day.

(i) Offers received on the same business day are selected in the following order:

(A) Offers from eligible direct or guaranteed single family housing loan applicants, with a request for credit on program terms. All offers are evaluated as if they were submitted at the listed price, regardless of the offering price.

(B) Offers from nonprofits or public bodies for conversion to use as transitional housing or for other special purposes as specified in paragraph (d)(4) of this section.

(C) Cash offers, from highest to lowest.

(D) NP credit offers, from highest to lowest.

(ii) Acceptable offers of equal priority received on the same business day are selected by lot.

(iii) REO properties are not held off the market pending the outcome of an appeal of RHS rejection of a request for financing.

(6) Sale by sealed bid or auction. RHS may authorize the sale of an REO property by sealed bid or public auction when it is in the best interest of the Government. RHS will publicly solicit requests for sealed bids and publicize auctions. If a successful bidder is unable to settle the transaction under the terms of the offer, except for the financing contingency, any required bid deposit may be retained by RHS. If the highest bid is lower than the minimum acceptable bid established by RHS, or if no acceptable bids are received, RHS may negotiate a sale without further public notice.

(d) Special purposes.

(1) REO property may be purchased for conversion to multiple family housing.

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(2) When a nonprofit organization or public body notifies RHS in writing of its intent to buy an REO property to provide transitional housing for the homeless, RHS may withdraw the property from the market for up to 30 days to give the entity an opportunity to execute a purchase contract. The listed price may be discounted for offers on a nonprogram REO property at any time, and on a program REO property after the 60-day reservation period. No down payment is required, and the loan term will be for a maximum of 30 years. Until RHS executes a sales agreement, an offer from a program-eligible applicant will receive priority, regardless of a nonprofit's interest in purchasing the REO property for use as transitional housing.

(3) NP properties may be leased to a nonprofit organization or public body to provide transitional housing for the homeless at an annual cost of one dollar. When an REO property is to be leased as transitional housing, RHS will make repairs needed to put the property in decent, safe, and sanitary condition. The lessee is responsible for all future repairs and maintenance.

(4) REO property may be sold under special provisions to nonprofit organizations or public bodies for the purpose of providing affordable housing to very low- and low-income families.

§ 3550.252 Debt settlement policies.

(a) Applicability. Debt settlement procedures may be initiated to collect any amounts due to RHS including:

- (1) Balances remaining on loan accounts after all liquidation proceeds or credits have been applied,
- (2) Subsidy recapture or grant amounts due, and
- (3) Unauthorized assistance due.

(b) Judgment. RHS may seek a judgment whenever a judgment might enable RHS to collect all or a significant portion of an amount owed.

(c) Multiple loans. RHS does not settle debts for one loan while other RHS loans on the same security property remain active.

(d) Cosigners and claims against estates. RHS may use any and all remedies available under law to collect from any cosigner and from a deceased borrower's estate.

(e) Reporting. RHS will report to the Internal Revenue Service and credit reporting agencies any debt settled through cancellation, compromise, or adjustment.

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(f) Settlement during legal or investigative action. Cases that are under investigation for fiscal irregularity or have been referred to the Office of the Inspector General, the Office of the General Counsel, or the U.S. Attorney will not be considered for debt settlement until final action by the investigating or prosecuting entity has been taken.

(g) Offsets. RHS may request offsets as described in § 3550.210 to collect amounts owed.

(h) Escrow funds. At liquidation all funds held in escrow or unapplied funds will be applied against the debt.

§ 3550.253 Settlement of a debt by compromise or adjustment.

Compromise or adjustment offers may be initiated by the debtor or by RHS. RHS will approve only those compromises and adjustments that are in the best interest of the Government.

(a) Compromise. A compromise is an agreement by RHS to release a debtor from liability upon receipt of a specified lump sum that is less than the total amount due.

(b) Adjustments. An adjustment is an agreement by RHS to release a debtor from liability generally upon receipt of an initial lump sum representing the maximum amount the debtor can afford to pay and periodic additional payments over a period of up to 5 years.

(c) Timing of offers.

(1) For a settlement offer to be considered, secured debts must be fully matured under the terms of the debt instrument or must have been accelerated by RHS.

(2) Unsecured debts owed after the sale of the security property may be proposed for compromise or adjustment at any time. Debts that were never secured may be proposed for compromise or adjustment when they are due and payable.

(d) Retention of security property. The debtor may retain the security property if the compromise payment is at least equal to the net recovery value, and it is in the best interest of the Government to allow the debtor to retain the security property.

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§ 3550.300 OMB control number.

The information collection requirements contained in this regulation have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and have been assigned OMB control number 0575-0172. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to vary from 5 minutes to 3 hours per response, with an average of 1 1/2 hours per response, including time for review instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

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