UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
101 SOUTH MAIN STREET
SUITE 102, FEDERAL BUILDING
TEMPLE, TEXAS 76501
Voice: (254) 742-9780
Fax: (254) 742-9709
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Texas USDA Rural Development Administrative Notice No. 549

SUBJECT: USDA Rural Development Instruction 1900-B, Adverse Decision Guide Letters for All Programs

July 20, 2001

TO: All Offices
USDA Rural Development, Texas

PURPOSE/INTENDED OUTCOME: The purpose of this Texas USDA Rural Development Administrative Notice (AN) is to provide guidance to field offices for adverse decision notifications for all programs.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS AN: There are no previous ANs issued on this subject.

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES: Texas USDA Rural Development employees will process adverse decisions in the following manner.

All programs will use the Direct Single Family Housing Field Office Handbook (HB-1-3550) to address all adverse decisions. The guide letters are found in HB-1-3550, Appendix 3, Letter 15 and Attachments 1-A through 1-I. This AN revises and eliminates some of the Attachments, since Texas USDA Rural Development is a USDA Certified Mediation State. The following is a list of each letter and attachment:

HB-1-3550 Appendix 3 - Handbook Letter 15 is still in effect (attached).
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-A is still in effect (attached).
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-B will be replaced with HB-1-3550 Texas Attachment 1-B (attached).
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-C is still in effect (attached).
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-D will be replaced with HB-1-3550 Texas Attachment 1-D (attached).
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-E will not be in effect.
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-F will not be in effect.
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-G will not be in effect.
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-H will not be in effect.
HB-1-3550 Attachment 1-I will be replaced with HB-1-3550 Texas Attachment 1-I (attached).

Please contact Billy L. Curb, Appeal & Alternative Dispute Resolution Coordinator in Rural Business-Cooperative Service, if you have any questions contact the number above.

RICHARD L. PERRYMAN
Acting State Director

Attachments

EXPIRATION DATE: Indefinite

FILING INSTRUCTIONS: Following RD Instruction 1900-B; & preceding HB-1-3550, Chapter 1, Appendix 3, & Appendix 7

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Lender, Provider and Employer. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20250-9410

REFERENCE: Field Office Handbook Chapter 1

SUBJECT: Standardized Adverse Decision Letter

Date: *insert today's date*

insert borrower(s) first/mi/last name(s) (Mr., Mrs., Ms.)
insert borrower(s) street/post office address
insert city, state, and zip code

Re: *Type/Amount of Assistance Requested*

Dear *insert borrower last name(s) (Mr., Mrs., Ms.)*:

Thank you for the opportunity to consider your request for USDA Rural Development assistance. In reviewing your request, we considered all information submitted to the Agency and the regulations that govern the assistance for which you applied. After careful review, we regret to inform you that we were unable to take favorable action on your request. The specific reasons for our decision are as follows:

The following items should be included in each adverse decision letter and can be presented in different formats depending upon the type of assistance requested and reasons for denial:

- Specific reasons for the decision;
- Regulatory basis (CFR citation) for the decision;
- If applicable, a statement of any evidence considered in making the decision such as credit reports, financial statements, etc.;
- If applicable, a statement of any issues presented by the customer such as those discussed during any meetings or phone conversations; and

If you believe our decision is incorrect, or the facts used in this case are in error, you may pursue your rights to challenge our decision. Please see the attached document.

Sincerely,

insert name of RD Official
insert title of RD Official

Attachment [insert TX Attachment 1-B or 1-C, as appropriate from Chapter 1]

ATTACHMENT 1-A

EQUAL CREDIT OPPURTUNITY ACT

The Federal Equal Credit Opportunity Act prohibits creditors from discriminating against credit applicants based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age (provided that the applicant has the capacity to enter into a binding contract), or because all or part of the applicant's income derives from any public assistance program. Department of Agriculture regulations provide that no agency, officer, or employee of the United States Department of Agriculture shall exclude from participation in, deny the benefits of, or subject to discrimination any person based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin under any program or activity administered by such agency, officer, or employee. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in real estate-related transactions, or in the terms and conditions of such a transaction, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin. If an applicant or borrower believes he or she has been discriminated against for any of these reasons, that person can write the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Applicants also cannot be denied a loan because the applicant has in good faith exercised his or her rights under the Consumer Credit Protection Act. If an applicant believes he or she was denied a loan for this reason, the applicant should contact the Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580.

TEXAS ATTACHMENT 1-B

ATTACHMENT TO LETTER NOTIFYING CUSTOMERS OF AN ADVERSE DECISION THAT IS APPEALABLE

The decision described in the attached letter did not [grant you the assistance you requested or will terminate or reduce the assistance you are currently receiving]. If you believe this decision or the facts used in this case are in error, you may pursue any or all of the following three options:

Option 1 – Informal Review

If you have questions concerning this decision or the facts used in making it and desire further explanation, you may write this office to request an informal review. ***There is no cost for an informal review.*** Your written request must be postmarked no later than 15 calendar days from the date of [the attached letter or this letter]. You must present any new information, possible alternatives, and your request to resolve the issues. You may also have a representative or legal counsel person, at the discretion of the Agency. Please include a daytime phone number in your request to arrange for the review. You may skip this step and select one of the following two options. If you do, you will automatically waive your right to an informal review.

Option 2 – Mediation as a Type of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

You have the right to request mediation for the issues that are available for mediation. The purpose of mediation is to resolve disputes through the use of a neutral, third party mediator. A mediator will listen to all parties involved in the dispute and work with all parties to achieve a resolution that all parties are in agreement with. However, a mediator cannot change the Agency decision. **You will have to pay 50 percent of the cost of mediation.** USDA Rural Development will pay the other 50 percent of the cost. If you need information to assist you in deciding whether to seek mediation, contact South Plains Association of Governments (SPAG).

If you elect to seek mediation, your ***written*** request for this service must be sent to SPAG at the address below and must be postmarked within 10 calendar days from the date you receive [the attached letter or this letter].

South Plains Association of Governments
Texas Rural Mediation Services
1323 58th Street
Lubbock, Texas 79412
(800) 858-1809 or (806) 762-8721
spag.drc@juno.com
FAX: (806)-765-9544

In addition to the customer asking for mediation, in order to preserve the customer's appeal rights, USDA Rural Development will advise the customer that they may also want to write to National Appeals Division (NAD) and ask for an appeal. USDA Rural Development will notify the customer that the time for an appeal has been suspended until the mediation is concluded.

Option 3 – Request an Appeal

You may request an appeal hearing by the NAD rather than an informal review or mediation. ***There is no cost for an appeal.*** Your request for an appeal must be made no later than 30 days from the date you receive [the attached letter or this letter]. You must write the Assistant Director of NAD, for your region at the following address:

National Appeals Division
Attn: Western Regional Assistant Director
755 Parfet Street, Suite 494
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-5599

Your request for an NAD hearing must state the reasons why you believe the decision is wrong, be personally signed by you, and must include a copy of the attached letter. A copy of your request must also be sent to the Texas USDA Rural Development State Director at:

State Director
USDA Rural Development
Attn: Texas ADR Coordinator
101 South Main Street, Suite 102
Temple, Texas 76501

You have the right to an appeal hearing within 45 days of the receipt of your request. You or your representative or counsel may contact this office anytime during regular office hours in the 10 calendar days following the receipt of your request for a hearing to examine or copy relevant non-confidential material in your file. Photocopies will be provided to you. Your representative or counsel should have your written authorization to represent you and review your file.

The NAD Hearing Officer will contact you regarding a time and place for the hearing. You may also request a teleconference hearing in lieu of the face-to-face hearing. At any time before the scheduled hearing, you may also request that the Hearing Officer make a decision without a hearing. If you do, the Hearing Officer's decision will be based on the USDA Rural Development file, any written statements or evidence you may provide and any additional information the Hearing Officer thinks necessary.

The Federal Equal Credit Opportunity Act prohibits creditors from discriminating against credit applicants based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age (provided that the applicant has the capacity to enter into a binding contract), or because all or part of the applicant's income derives from any public assistance program. Department of Agriculture regulations provide that no agency, officer, or employee of the United States Department of Agriculture shall exclude from participation in, deny the benefits of, or subject to discrimination any person based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin under any program or activity administered by such agency, officer, or employee. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in real estate-related transactions, or in the terms and conditions of such a transaction, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin. If an applicant or borrower believes he or she has been discriminated against or any other reasons, that person can write the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Applicants also cannot be denied a loan because the applicant has in good faith exercised his or her right under the Consumer Credit Protection Act. If an applicant believes he or she was denied a loan for this reason, the applicant should contact the Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580.

[If you have any questions, please contact the decision-maker at (000) 000-000.]

ATTACHMENT 1-C

ATTACHMENT TO LETTER NOTIFYING CUSTOMERS OF AN ADVERSE DECISION THAT CANNOT BE APPEALED

The decision described in the [attached letter did not grant you the assistance you requested or will terminate or reduce the assistance you are currently receiving].

If you have questions concerning this decision or the facts used in making it and desire further explanation, you may write this office to request an informal review. This written request must be received no later than 15 calendar days from the date of [the attached letter or this letter]. You must present any new information, evidence, and possible alternatives along with your request. You may also have a representative or legal counsel participate in the process, at your cost. The informal review may be conducted by telephone or in person, at the discretion of the Agency. Please include a daytime phone number in your request to arrange for the review.

Applicants and borrowers generally have a right to appeal adverse decisions, but decisions based on certain reasons cannot be appealed. We have determined that reasons for the decision cannot be appealed under our regulations. You may, however, write the Assistant Director, National Appeals Division (NAD) for a review of the accuracy of our finding that the decision cannot be appealed. Your request must be made no later than 30 days from the date you receive [the attached letter or this letter].

National Appeals Division; Attn: Western Regional Assistant Director
755 Parfet Street, Suite 494
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-5599

The Federal Equal Credit Opportunity Act prohibits creditors from discriminating against credit applicants based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age (provided that the applicant has the capacity to enter into a binding contract), or because all or part of the applicant's income derives from any public assistance program. Department of Agriculture regulations provide that no agency, officer, or employee of the United State Department of Agriculture shall exclude from participation in, deny the benefits of, or subject to discrimination any person based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin under any program or activity administered by such agency, officer, or employee. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in real estate-related transactions, or in the terms and conditions of such a transaction, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin. If an applicant or borrower believes he or she has been discriminated against for any other reasons, that person can write the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Applicants also cannot be denied a loan because the applicant has in good faith exercised his or her right under the Consumer Credit Protection Act. If an applicant believes he or she was denied a loan for this reason, the applicant should contact the Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580.

TEXAS ATTACHMENT 1-D

ATTACHMENT TO LETTER NOTIFYING CUSTOMERS OF UNFAVORABLE DECISION REACHED AS A RESULT OF AN INFORMAL REVIEW

We appreciated the opportunity to review the facts relative to your request for assistance. From our review of the facts, we were unable to [grant the assistance you requested or we must terminate or reduce the assistance you are currently receiving]. If you believe our determination is in error, you may pursue any or all of the following two options:

Option 1 – Mediation as a Type of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

You have the right to request mediation for the issues that are available for mediation. The purpose of mediation is to resolve disputes through the use of a neutral, third party mediator. A mediator will listen to all parties involved in the dispute and work with all parties to achieve a resolution that all parties are in agreement with. However, a mediator cannot change the Agency decision. **You will have to pay 50 percent of the cost of mediation.** USDA Rural Development will pay the other 50 percent of the cost. If you need information to assist you in deciding whether to seek mediation, contact South Plains Association of Governments (SPAG).

If you elect to seek mediation, your ***written*** request for this service must be sent to SPAG at the address below and must be postmarked within 10 calendar days from the date you receive [the attached letter or this letter].

South Plains Association of Governments
Texas Rural Mediation Services
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In addition to the customer asking for mediation, in order to preserve the customer's appeal rights, USDA Rural Development will advise the customer that they may also want to write to National Appeals Division (NAD) and ask for an appeal. USDA Rural Development will notify the customer that the time for an appeal has been suspended until the mediation is concluded.

Option 2 - Request an Appeal

You may request an appeal hearing by the NAD rather than an informal review or mediation. There is no cost for an appeal. Your request for an appeal must be postmarked no later than 30 days from the date you receive [the attached letter or this letter]. You must write the Assistant Director of NAD, for your region at the following address:

National Appeals Division
Attn: Western Regional Assistant Director
755 Parfet Street, Suite 494
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-5599

The request for an NAD hearing must state the reasons why you believe the decision is wrong, be personally signed by you, and must include a copy of the attached letter. A copy of your request must also be sent to the Texas USDA Rural Development State Director at the following address:

State Director
USDA Rural Development
Attn: Texas ADR Coordinator
101 South Main Street, Suite 102
Temple, Texas 76501

You have the right to an appeal hearing within 45 days of the receipt of your request. You or your representative or counsel may contact this office anytime during regular office hours in the 10 calendar days following the receipt of your request for a hearing to examine or copy relevant non-confidential material in your file. Photocopies will be provided to you. Your representative or counsel should have your written authorization to represent you and review your file.

The NAD Hearing Officer will contact you regarding a time and place for the hearing. You may also request a teleconference hearing in lieu of the face-to-face hearing. At any time before the scheduled hearing, you may also request that the Hearing Officer make a decision without a hearing. If you do, the Hearing Officer's decision will be based on the USDA Rural Development file, any written statements or evidence you may provide and any additional information the Hearing Officer thinks necessary.

The Federal Equal Credit Opportunity Act prohibits creditors from discriminating against credit applicants based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age (provided that the applicant has the capacity to enter into a binding contract), or because all or part of the applicant's income derives from any public assistance program. Department of Agriculture regulations provide that no agency, officer, or employee of the United States Department of Agriculture shall exclude from participation in, deny the benefits of, or subject to discrimination any person based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin under any program or activity administered by such agency, officer, or employee. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in real estate-related transactions, or in the terms and conditions of such a transaction, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin. If an applicant or borrower believes he or she has been discriminated against for any other reasons, that person can write the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Applicants also cannot be denied a loan because the applicant has in good faith exercised his or her right under the Consumer Credit Protection Act. If an applicant believes he or she was denied a loan for this reason, the applicant should contact the Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580.

[If you have any questions, please contact the decision-maker at (000) 000-000.]

TEXAS ATTACHMENT 1-I

ATTACHMENT FOR NOTIFYING CUSTOMERS THAT MEDIATION AS A TYPE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR) DID NOT RESULT IN RESOLUTION OF ISSUES

We regret that we are unable to [grant the assistance you requested or that we must terminate or reduce the assistance you are currently receiving]. Mediation did not result in resolution of the issues.

If you believe the decision or facts used in the case are in error, you may pursue your right to an appeal by the National Appeals Division (NAD). ***There is no cost for an appeal.*** The number of days in which you have to request an appeal depends upon whether you previously requested an appeal to NAD prior to entering into mediation. ***Please follow the guidance in the paragraph indicated with an "X".***

_____ You requested an appeal hearing to NAD prior to entering into mediation. You must write to the Assistant Director of NAD, at the following address to schedule the appeal hearing:

National Appeals Division
Attn: Western Regional Assistant Director
755 Parfet Street, Suite 494
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-5599

_____ You did not request an appeal hearing to NAD prior to entering into mediation. You must write to the Assistant Director of NAD, at the following address. Your request must be postmarked within ____ days from receipt of this letter. This represents the difference between the 30-day period to respond and the number of days you took to respond, after receipt of the USDA Rural Development adverse decision letter.

National Appeals Division
Attn: Western Regional Assistant Director
755 Parfet Street, Suite 494
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-5599

Information Regarding Appeals

You have the right to an appeal hearing within 45 days of NAD's receipt of your request. You or your representative or counsel may contact this office anytime during regular office hours in the 10 calendar days following the receipt of your request for a hearing to examine or copy relevant non-confidential material in your file. Photocopies will be provided to you. Your representative or counsel should have your written authorization to represent you and review your file.

The NAD Hearing Officer will contact you regarding a time and place for the hearing. You may also request a teleconference hearing in lieu of the face-to-face hearing. At any time before the scheduled hearing you may also request that the Hearing Officer make a decision without a hearing. If you do, the Hearing Officer's decision will be based on the USDA Rural Development file, any written statements or evidence you may provide, and any additional information the Hearing Officer thinks necessary.

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[If you have any questions, please contact the decision-maker at (000) 000-000.]

cc: NAD Assistant Director