

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Rural Utilities Service****Information Collection Activity;
Comment Request****AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended), the Rural Utilities Service's (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by February 18, 2005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard Annan, Acting Director, Program Development & Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 5168 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 720-0784. FAX: (202) 720-4120.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulation (5 CFR 1320) implanting provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see 5 CFR 1320.8(d)). This notice identifies an information collection that RUS is submitting to OMB for extension.

Comments are invited on (a) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumption used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques on other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Dawn Wolfgang, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 5166-South, STOP 1522, Washington, DC 20250-1522. FAX: (202) 720-4120. E-mail: dawn.wolfgang@usda.gov.

Title: Electric Loan Application and Related Reporting Burdens.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0032.

Type of Request: Extension of a previously approved information collection, with change.

Abstract: The Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*), as amended (RE Act) authorizes and empowers the Administrator of RUS to make and guarantee loans to furnish and improve electric service in rural areas. These loans are amortized over a period of up to 35 years and secured by the borrower's electric assets. In the interest of protecting loan security, monitoring compliance with debt covenants, and ensuring that RUS loan funds are used for purposes authorized by law, RUS requires that borrowers prepare and submit for RUS evaluation, certain studies and reports. Some of these studies and reports are required only once for each loan application; others must be submitted periodically until the loan is completely repaid.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 14 hours per response.

Respondents: Businesses or other for profits; not-for-profit institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 680.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 6.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 65,673.

Copies of this information collection, and related form and instructions, can be obtained from Dawn Wolfgang, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, at (202) 720-0812.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: December 14, 2004.

Hilda Gay Legg,

Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.

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BILLING CODE 3410-15-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Rural Utilities Service****North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation; Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment****AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Notice of availability of an environmental assessment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency delivering the U.S. Department

of Agriculture's Rural Development Utilities Programs, is issuing an environmental assessment with respect to the environmental impacts related to the construction of a 336 megawatt (MW) simple-cycle electric generation facility in Anson County, North Carolina, and a 280 MW simple-cycle electric generation facility and a 7.8-mile 230 kV transmission line in Richmond County, North Carolina. RUS may provide financing assistance to North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation for the project.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lawrence Wolfe, Rural Utilities Service, Engineering and Environmental Staff, Stop 1571, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1571, telephone: (202) 720-9053. Mr. Wolfe's e-mail address is larry.wolfe@usda.gov. Information is also available from June Small of North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation. Ms. Small may be contacted by telephone at (919) 872-0800. Ms. Small's e-mail address is june.small@ncemcs.com.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation's proposed electric generation project will involve the construction and operation of a 336 MW simple-cycle electric generation facility at a site located approximately 4 miles east of Lilesville, just to the north of State Route 1745 (Blewett Falls Road) and south of McCoy Creek in Anson County, North Carolina. The site is 178 acres. Approximately 20 acres of the site will be needed for the generation facility. The facility will be made up of 6 Pratt and Whitney FT-8 combustion turbine units. (Each unit is comprised of 2 turbines.) This facility will require 12 exhaust stacks approximately 60 feet tall. This project will also involve the construction of a 280 MW electric generation facility at a site approximately 2.54 miles southwest of Hamlet west of Airport Road and south of Marks Creek in Richmond County, North Carolina. The site is 258 acres of which approximately 15 to 20 acres will be needed for the generation facility. The facility will be made up of 5 Pratt and Whitney FT-8 combustion turbine units. This facility will require 10 exhaust stacks approximately 60 feet tall. This facility will require the construction of 7.8 miles of 230 kV transmission line between the Rockingham Substation and the Richmond Substation. The transmission line will be constructed and operated by Progress Energy. North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation will incur the cost of the project and finance its cost through an RUS guarantee. Specific