

Forest Service, USDA

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property which is the subject of the review report; and

(B) The review appraiser has not received compensation that was contingent upon approval of the appraisal report.

§ 254.10 Bargaining; arbitration.

(a) Unless the parties to an exchange agree in writing to suspend or modify the deadlines contained in paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(4) of this section, the parties shall adhere to the following:

(1)(i) Within 180 days from the date of receipt of the appraisal(s) for review and approval by the authorized officer, the parties to an exchange may agree on the appraised values or may initiate a process of bargaining or some other process to determine values. Bargaining or any other process must be based on an objective analysis of the valuation in the appraisal report(s) and is a means of reconciling differences in such report(s). Bargaining or another process to determine values may involve one or more of the following actions:

(A) Submission of the disputed appraisal(s) to another qualified appraiser for review;

(B) Request for additional appraisals;

(C) Involvement of an impartial third party to facilitate resolution of the value disputes, or

(D) Use of some other acceptable and commonly recognized practice for resolving value disputes.

(ii) Any agreement based upon bargaining must be in writing and made part of the administrative record of the exchange. Such agreement must contain a reference to all relevant appraisal information and state how the parties reconciled or compromised appraisal information to arrive at an agreement based on market value.

(2) If within 180 days from the date of receipt of the appraisal(s) for review and approval by the authorized officer, the parties to an exchange cannot agree on values but wish to continue with the land exchange, the appraisal(s), at the initiative of either party, must be submitted to arbitration, unless, in lieu of arbitration, the parties have employed a process of bargaining or some other process to determine values. If arbitration occurs, it

must be conducted in accordance with the real estate valuation arbitration rules of the American Arbitration Association. The Secretary or an official to whom such authority has been delegated shall appoint an arbitrator from a list provided by the American Arbitration Association.

(3) Within 30 days after completion of arbitration, the parties involved in the exchange must determine whether to proceed with the exchange, modify the exchange to reflect the findings of the arbitration or any other factors, or withdraw from the exchange. A decision to withdraw from the exchange may be made upon written notice by either party at this time or at any other time prior to entering into a binding exchange agreement.

(4) If the parties agree to proceed with an exchange after arbitration, the values established by arbitration are binding upon all parties for a period not to exceed 2 years from the date of the arbitration decision.

(b) Arbitration is limited to the disputed valuation of the lands involved in a proposed exchange and an arbitrator's award decision is limited to the value estimate(s) of the contested appraisal(s). An arbitrator may not include in an award decision recommendations regarding the terms of a proposed exchange, nor may an arbitrator's award decision infringe upon the authority of the Secretary to make all decisions regarding management of Federal lands and to make public interest determinations.

§ 254.11 Exchanges at approximately equal value.

(a) The authorized officer may exchange lands which are of approximately equal value upon a determination that:

(1) The exchange is in the public interest and the consummation of the proposed exchange will be expedited;

(2) The value of the lands to be conveyed out of Federal ownership is not more than \$150,000 as based upon a statement of value prepared by a qualified appraiser and accepted by an authorized officer;

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(3) The Federal and non-Federal lands are substantially similar in location, acreage, use, and physical attributes; and

(4) There are no significant elements of value requiring complex analysis.

(b) The authorized officer, not the non-Federal party, determines whether the Federal and non-Federal lands are approximately equal in value and must document how the determination was made.

§ 254.12 Value equalization; cash equalization waiver.

(a) To equalize the agreed upon values of the Federal and non-Federal lands involved in an exchange, either with or without adjustments of relative values as compensation for various costs, the parties to an exchange may agree to:

(1) Modify the exchange proposal by adding or excluding lands; and/or

(2) Use cash equalization, after making all reasonable efforts to equalize values by adding or deleting lands.

(b) The combined amount of any cash equalization payment and/or the amount of adjustments agreed to as compensation for costs under § 254.7 of this subpart may not exceed 25 percent of the value of the Federal lands to be conveyed.

(c) The Secretary of Agriculture may not waive cash equalization payment due the United States, but the parties may agree to waive cash equalization payment due the non-Federal party. The amount to be waived may not exceed 3 percent of the value of the lands being exchanged out of Federal ownership or \$15,000, whichever is less.

(d) A cash equalization payment may be waived only after the authorized officer certifies, in writing, that the waiver will expedite the exchange and that the public interest will be best served by the waiver.

§ 254.13 Approval of exchanges; notice of decision.

(a) Upon completion of all environmental analyses and appropriate documentation, appraisals, and all other supporting studies and requirements to determine if a proposed exchange is in the public interest and in compliance with applicable law and regulations,

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the authorized officer shall decide whether to approve an exchange proposal.

(1) When a decision to approve or disapprove an exchange is made, the authorized officer shall publish a notice of the availability of the decision in newspapers of general circulation. At a minimum, the notice must include:

(i) The date of decision;

(ii) A concise description of the decision;

(iii) The name and title of the deciding official;

(iv) Directions for obtaining a copy of the decision; and

(v) The date of the beginning of the appeal period.

(2) The authorized officer shall distribute notices to the State and local governmental subdivisions having authority in the geographical area within which the lands covered by the notice are located, the non-Federal exchange parties, authorized users of involved Federal lands, the congressional delegation, and individuals who requested notification or filed written objections, and others as appropriate.

(b) For a period of 45 days after the date of publication of a notice of the availability of a decision to approve or disapprove an exchange proposal, the decision shall be subject to appeal as provided under 36 CFR part 215 or, for eligible parties, under 36 CFR part 251, subpart C.

[59 FR 10867, Mar. 8, 1994, as amended at 64 FR 25822, May 13, 1999]

§ 254.14 Exchange agreement.

(a) The parties to a proposed exchange may enter into an exchange agreement subsequent to a decision by the authorized officer to approve the exchange, pursuant to § 254.13 of this subpart. Such an agreement is required if hazardous substances are present on the non-Federal lands. An exchange agreement must contain the following:

(1) Identification of the parties, description of the lands and interests to be exchanged, identification of all reserved and outstanding interests, stipulation of any necessary cash equalization, and all other terms and conditions necessary to complete an exchange;