

CHAPTER 5: PROPERTY REQUIREMENTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Ensuring that the quality and the value of the property meet certain minimum thresholds is as important as ensuring that the applicant is willing and able to repay a loan. The Agency imposes quality and value requirements to protect the borrower's interest and, in the event of liquidation, the Agency's interest.

A. Overview of Property Requirements

1. *Ensuring Quality*

Four sections of this chapter deal with quality assurance. Section 1 describes the requirements for approving a site -- its location, its size and amenities, and the adequacy of available utility systems. Section 2 describes requirements for the dwelling itself, which must be modest, but also decent, safe, and sanitary. The standards that apply differ somewhat depending upon whether the dwelling will be newly constructed or is an existing home. Section 3 describes the Agency's requirements for the protection of environmental resources and the due diligence required with regard to hazardous substances. Section 6 provides guidance for monitoring construction activities to ensure that any construction or repair work is appropriately conducted and completed.

2. *Ensuring Adequate Value*

Before the Agency makes a loan, the Loan Originator must ensure that the applicant will have an appropriate form of ownership and that the Agency's interest in the property is adequately secured by the value of the real estate and the Agency's lien position. Section 4 specifies Agency security requirements and Section 5 provides guidance on conducting appraisals of the property's value.

B. Key Processing Steps Related to Property Requirements

When applicants locate properties, they must provide the Loan Originator with the basic information needed to initiate the Agency's review of the property. Applicants who do not currently own the property must submit an option or sales contract and a location map with the address and directions to the property. Applicants who already own the property must submit

evidence of ownership, a legal description, a property survey showing all structures on the site, address and directions to the property. The Loan Originator will use the USDA Address Verification web site to verify the property address given is accurate and that it is entered in UniFi exactly as indicated in the response. The web site address is: <http://eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov/eligibility/addressVerification>. If a code match of 1 or 2 is received, the Loan Originator should enter the address as indicated into UniFi. Occasionally, the remote location or newness of the address, or the fact that the address has not yet been placed in the geocode database will cause the address verification site to return codes other than 1 or 2. When this occurs, the Loan Originator must verify the address with the post office, local tax/property recording office, etc. If, after researching with these local entities, it is determined that the best possible address for the property has been obtained, it may be entered into UniFi. Any discrepancy in code returned should be explained and documented in the case file running record. However, addresses that return a code other than 1 or 2 should be reverified at the address website prior to closing and corrected in UniFi and/or MortgageServ when appropriate.

1. Preliminary Review

Within 7 business days of submission by an applicant who has been determined eligible for section 502 assistance, the Loan Approval Official must visit the property to conduct a preliminary evaluation. The Loan Approval Official's review is not intended to take the place of any of the formal reviews that are conducted later. Rather, this evaluation should determine whether, with any planned construction or rehabilitation, it appears the property will meet the Agency's site and dwelling requirements as described in this chapter. Additionally, this site visit is an opportunity to gather initial information which may be used in the completion of the environmental review. Attachment 5-A can serve as a guide for examining existing housing structures. Attachment 5-B is used to evaluate the acceptability of each site (developed and undeveloped).

To determine the potential for impacts to protected environmental resources, the Loan Approval Official must complete an environmental review, as described in Section 3 of this chapter. Occasionally, a proposal may have the potential to have an impact on 1 or more protected environmental resources. In such instances, the Agency is generally required to consult with other Federal agencies, and State or local governments to resolve the issue. If it appears that more than 7 days will be required to satisfactorily complete the environmental review, the Loan Originator must notify the applicant. Applicants should be informed that they may be asked to provide information, or to take certain mitigation measures to help resolve the issue.

The Loan Approval Official also must complete *FEMA Form 81-93, Standard Flood Hazard Determination*, to document whether the property is located in a Special Flood

Hazard Area (SFHA) and if so, state the availability of flood insurance. Flood insurance is not required for loans and grants with an original principal balance of \$5,000 or less. If, through the environmental review process, the Loan Approval Official determines that there is no practical alternative to construction, purchase, or repair in the floodplain, and flood insurance is required, the Loan Approval Official will provide the applicant with *Form RD 3550-6, Notice of Special Flood Hazards, Flood Insurance Purchase Requirements, and Availability of Federal Disaster Relief Assistance*.

If the property appears to be acceptable, the Loan Originator requests an appraisal. If the property is not acceptable, the Loan Originator notifies the applicant and, if the problems cannot be remedied, issues a new *Form RD 1944-59, Certificate of Eligibility*.

2. Appraisal

Appraisals may be completed by qualified Agency staff or contract appraisers and are generally completed within 30 days of the request. Depending upon the purpose of the proposed loan, the appraiser may be asked to give an “as-is” or “as-improved” value.

3. Review of Property and Site for Compliance with Agency Standards

Before loan approval, the Loan Originator must confirm that the property meets, or will meet with any planned constructions or repairs, all applicable Agency requirements. This is accomplished both through determinations made directly by the Loan Originator and review of opinions or determinations made by others, such as appraisers, local building officials, architectural and engineering professionals, and trades professionals.

4. Identification and Correction of Deficiencies

If at any point during the review process, deficiencies are identified that jeopardize the Agency’s ability to approve a loan, the Loan Originator must notify the applicant and give the applicant at least 30 days to resolve the deficiency. For example, if an inspection reveals a structural deficiency that can be corrected, the applicant could negotiate with the seller to reduce the sales price so that funds to correct the deficiency could be included in the loan, or to correct the deficiency before the property is transferred.

If a deficiency cannot be satisfactorily corrected, the Loan Originator notifies the applicant and provides a new *Form RD 1944-59, Certificate of Eligibility*.

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SECTION 1: SITE REQUIREMENTS [7 CFR 3550.56]

5.2 OVERVIEW

Once the applicant has found a property, the Agency needs to ensure that it fits program guidelines regarding sites. The site must be developed according to the development standards imposed by State or local government. These standards are often contained in zoning ordinances, building codes, subdivision regulations, and/or construction standards. Attachment 5-B must be completed in addition to meeting the standards for planning and performing site development work outlined in RD Instruction 1924-C. The Loan Originator, or appraiser, will complete Attachment 5-A or similar guide, to evaluate the acceptability of each site (developed or undeveloped). In particular, sites must be in rural areas, be modest, and meet minimum standards regarding water and wastewater systems, and Agency street and access requirements. This section addresses each of these standards.



5.3 RURAL AREA DESIGNATION

A. Rural Area Definition

Rural areas are defined as:

- Open country that is not part of or associated with an urban area; or
- Any town, village, city, or place (including the immediately adjacent densely settled area) that is not part of or associated with an urban area, and that:
 - ◊ Is rural in character with a population of less than 10,000; or
 - ◊ Is not contained within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and has a serious lack of mortgage credit with a population between 10,000 and 20,000.

1. Assessing “Open Country”

A site that is in “open country not part of or associated with an urban area” is one that is separated by open space from any adjacent densely populated urban area. Open space includes undeveloped land, agricultural land, or sparsely settled areas. Open space does not include physical barriers (such as rivers or canals), public parks, commercial and industrial developments, small areas reserved for recreational purposes, and open space set aside for future development.

In order to determine if a property is in open country, the Loan Originator should review recent maps, aerial photographs, and/or conduct a site visit. In particular, the Loan Originator should look for significant new development in parts of rural areas that adjoin nonrural areas, and investigate the likelihood that local authorities may redesignate the area's corporate limits.

2. *Assessing "Population"*

In order to find the population figures for a locality, the Loan Originator should use the decennial U.S. Census of Population, or population updates published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

3. *Assessing "Serious Lack of Mortgage Credit"*

There is a serious lack of mortgage credit which is readily available to families throughout rural America at rates and terms comparable to those offered by the Agency. Therefore, Agency officials do not need to determine if there is a serious lack of mortgage credit available when determining whether an area is rural, or in reviewing rural area designations.

B. Special Considerations

1. *Exception for Rural Areas Designated Prior to October 1990*

If an area was classified as rural prior to October 1, 1990, even if it is within an MSA, it may be still considered rural as long as it: (1) has a population between 10,000 and 25,000 and (2) is rural in character. This designation can remain effective through receipt of census data for the year 2010.

2. *Contiguous Areas*

Two or more towns, villages, cities, or places that are contiguous may be considered separately for a rural designation if they are not otherwise associated with each other, and their densely settled areas are not contiguous.

Paragraph 5.3 Rural Area Designation

When determining the population count for an area, the Loan Originator also should consider developed areas in contiguous counties or states. In cases involving contiguous counties, the appropriate population figure to be used for the area in question should be determined after consultation with the State Director. In an area involving contiguous states, the applicable population figure should be determined through an agreement between the 2 State Directors. The Loan Approval Official should contact both State Directors to help make this determination.

C. Reviewing Rural Area Designations

An area's rural designation may be changed as a result of a periodic review or after the decennial census of population. Both types of review are discussed below. In all cases, the local office should maintain a perpetual master file to document all rural area decisions.

1. Periodic Reviews

Each Field Office must review all areas under its jurisdiction every 5 years to identify areas that no longer qualify as rural. In areas experiencing rapid growth and in eligible communities within MSAs, the review should take place every 3 years. Field Office files must contain documentation that local planning boards, where available, were contacted at the time of each review to verify that areas considered open spaces are not scheduled for development in the next 5 years.

Field Staff must prepare a review report that includes a recommendation on those areas that should be redesignated. An acceptable form for this report is a map showing an outline of the area recommended to be redesignated, and a cover letter explaining the reasons for the recommendation. The review report must be signed by the Loan Approval Official, and submitted to the State Director on or before February 28 of the review year.

Once the review report has been submitted, the State Director will notify the public that the Agency will be conducting a formal review of those areas that have been recommended for redesignation. At a minimum, this notice should be published in local newspapers and posted in local Agency offices. The notice should be published at least 90 days before the date of the final determination in order to give interested parties an adequate chance to comment.

The State Director will make a final determination on designations based on the review report and public comments and notify the Field Office of the final decision.

2. *Census Reviews*

In addition to periodic reviews, the State Director is responsible for implementing redesignations based on the decennial U.S. Census of Population and any biannual updates. Immediately after receiving the population information from the Census Bureau, the State Director must make appropriate changes in designation for areas with populations under 10,000.

3. *Notification of Determination*

By September 30 of each review year, or after the census review is complete, the State Director will distribute a State Supplement that updates, establishes, lists, and maps all ineligible areas. The State Supplement will include county maps showing all ineligible areas in each county. In the official boundary lines of the county map, the State Director will incorporate a “buffer zone” of ineligible areas in the open country designations to compensate for change.



Members of the public should have access to information about ineligible areas through maps posted in the Field Office or handouts that list or show all ineligible areas. If an entire county is ineligible, that information should be posted at the Field Office in a public place and provided to the local news media.

If an area’s designation changes from nonrural to rural (for example, due to a drop in population), public notification is required to ensure that all lenders and other interested parties are made aware of the availability of Agency credit in the newly-eligible area.

4. *Making Loans in Areas Changed to Nonrural*

If an area’s designation changes from rural to nonrural, the Loan Approval Official may approve loans in that area only under the circumstances listed below.

- If an applicant who applied before an area’s designation changed selects a property in the newly designated nonrural area, a loan may be made for that property if it meets all other eligibility requirements.
- New conditional commitments may be issued in nonrural areas if a purchaser is found whose loan application was complete before the area’s designation changed.
- Existing conditional commitments will be honored only if a purchaser is found whose loan application was complete before the area’s designation changed.

Paragraph 5.3 Rural Area Designation


- REO property sales and transfers with assumption may be processed in areas that have changed to nonrural.
- Subsequent loans may be made on a property that already has an Agency loan to: (1) make necessary repairs; (2) to pay equity in connection with an assumption of the Agency loan; or (3) to pay equity to a departing co-borrower.


5.4 MODEST SITES

Modest sites are defined by their size, value, and the presence of any outbuildings. Therefore, the Loan Originator must verify that the requirements listed below are met.

- **Size.** The site must not be large enough to be subdivided under local subdivision regulations.
- **Value.** The value of the site must not exceed 30 percent of the as-improved market value of the property. The 30 percent limitation may be exceeded if the site cannot be subdivided into two or more sites and the value of the site is typical for the area, as evidenced by the appraisal and the practices of other lenders.
- **Farm Buildings.** The property must not include farm service buildings; however smaller outbuildings such as storage sheds are allowed.

5.5 ADEQUATE WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

The site must have water and wastewater disposal systems, whether individual, central, or privately-owned and operated, that meet the applicable water and wastewater disposal system requirements of RD Instruction 1924-C. There must be assurance of continuous service at reasonable rates for central water and wastewater disposal systems. A system owned or operated by a private party must have a legally irrevocable agreement which allows interested third parties to enforce the obligation. 

Private companies usually inspect individual wells and septic system drainfields -- these companies provide written results of the inspection. In addition, the responsible local or State regulatory agency must verify, in writing, that the privately-owned water and wastewater disposal systems, that serve multiple households, comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300h) and the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1341), respectively. Inspections are not required on public water and wastewater disposal systems. 

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SECTION 2: DWELLING REQUIREMENTS [7 CFR 3550.63(a)]

5.6 MODEST HOUSING

To be considered “modest”, the property must be one that is considered modest for the area, must not have a market value in excess of the applicable area loan limit, and must not have certain prohibited features.

A. Establishing Area Loan Limits Within a State

The National Office will provide State Offices the cost to construct a modest house. The cost will not include a site or typical site development costs. Each state must collect and maintain the typical market value of sites, the cost of water and sewage, driveways, and landscaping, etc. for each area. The market value must be based on comparable sales data for typical sites and improvements in each area. The cost to construct and the market value of the improved site will be added together to create the area loan limits.

B. Options for Establishing Area Loan Limits Within a State

State Directors have two options for establishing area loan limits within a state. With either option, the area loan limit will not exceed the local HUD 203(b) limit in effect unless approved by the Deputy Administrator, Single Family Housing. These options are:

1. Area loan limits may be established on a county, regional or statewide basis. Where needed, due to fluctuations in housing prices within a county, a state may publish more than one area loan limit for the county. Areas must be clearly defined;

or

2. States may choose to adopt the State Housing Authority (SHA) limit as long as the SHA limit is within 10 percent of the cost data plus the market value of an improved lot. If the State chooses to adopt the SHA limit and the SHA has different limits for new construction and existing dwellings, the State must adopt both limits. If the SHA uses targeted and non-targeted limits, the non-targeted limit will be used for our purposes.

Under no circumstances will States use the cost data plus the market value of an improved lot and the SHA limit. States **must** choose only 1 of the 2 options.

C. Notification

State Directors will issue a state instruction establishing which option will be used. Once an option is chosen, states are not authorized to alternate between options throughout the year without prior approval from the Deputy Administrator, Single Family Housing. Requests for a change must be accompanied by documentation to support the request. States will notify real estate agents, brokers, building contractors, lenders, partners, etc. of area loan limits as well as any changes throughout the year.

Individual exceptions to the Established Area Loan Limits may be granted to accommodate the specific needs of an applicant, for example, to serve exceptionally large households or to provide reasonable accommodation for a household member with a disability. Requests for exceptions may be approved by the State Director if the cost of the property will exceed the limit by \$3,600 or less.

To request an exception, the Loan Originator must fully document the need for the exception.

- For accommodations for household members with disabilities, the Loan Originator must provide the cost of accommodations that demonstrates that these costs cannot be accommodated within the area's modest housing limit; and
- If approval is granted, the Loan Originator follow UniFi procedures for overriding the maximum loan limits.

D. Prohibited Features

1. Swimming Pools

Properties that include in-ground pools will not be financed. It is not acceptable to remove a pool before or after closing to meet this requirement.

2. Income-Producing Land or Structures

Properties that include income-producing land or buildings designed to accommodate a business or income-producing enterprise will not be financed. Homebased operations that do not require specific features such as child care, product sales, or craft production are not restricted.

5.7 DECENT, SAFE AND SANITARY DWELLINGS

To help ensure that dwellings are “decent, safe, and sanitary,” the Agency has established minimum standards for new and existing dwellings.

A. Existing Dwellings

Existing dwellings must be structurally sound and functionally adequate, and be in good repair or be placed in good repair with loan funds. Homes with older effective age or in fair condition must be energy efficient and should be thoroughly and carefully inspected to ensure the overall soundness of the home.

To verify that all major systems are adequate State-licensed inspectors must certify that the dwelling has been inspected and meets Agency standards with respect to: (1) termites and other pests; (2) plumbing, water and sewage; and (3) heating and cooling; (4) electrical systems; and (5) structural soundness. When a State does not license inspectors, a qualified, independent, third-party inspector may provide these certifications.

If the loan does not exceed \$7,500 and the repayment schedule does not exceed 15 years, the dwelling’s major systems are not subject to inspection by State-licensed inspectors and the dwelling may lack some equipment or features after repairs such as a complete bath, kitchen cabinets, closets, or completed finished interior in some rooms. These dwellings must otherwise meet the housing needs of the applicant and provide decent, safe, and sanitary living conditions when the improvements financed with the loan are completed.

B. New Construction

All construction must meet the standards contained in RD Instruction 1924-A. The process for ensuring that the Agency’s construction standards are met is described in Section 6 of this chapter.



C. Survey Requirements

A survey is required for any property which is currently not financed by the Agency. Typically the survey will be obtained as a loan approval condition to be made available to the Loan Approval Official before loan closing. The Loan Originator must determine that all existing and proposed structures are or will be located on the site. A title insurance policy with survey coverage may be accepted when the State Director determines it is an acceptable substitute for a survey in the State. When a new survey is needed, it must contain boundary lines, any improvements, encroachments on the subject or adjacent property, above-ground easements, setbacks imposed by either restrictive covenant or zoning, and any additional requirements needed to obtain title insurance. For new construction, the boundary corners must also be clearly marked. An existing survey may be used if it meets the requirements of the title insurance.

D. Flood-Related Requirements

Flood insurance is required for all dwellings located within the 100-year flood plain, unless FEMA has granted an exception, and flood insurance is available as part of the community's flood plain management regulations.

For all new construction and substantial improvements the lowest floor (including basement) must be elevated to or above the 100-year flood level. For existing dwellings, the first floor elevation of the habitable space must be at or above the 100-year (base) flood level.

In addition, for newly constructed and substantially rehabilitated dwellings, the construction materials and methods used must be for the purpose of making the structure resistant to flood damage, and minimizing any damage that may occur. RD Instruction 426.2 contains further guidance on the National Flood Insurance Program and flood-related requirements.

All dwellings within the 100-year flood plain must be served by public utilities that are located and constructed to minimize or eliminate flood damage, or have an on-site water supply and waste disposal system located and constructed to avoid contamination of the water supply by the septic system due to flooding.

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SECTION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS
[7 CFR 3550.5]



5.8 PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The Agency considers environmental quality equally with economic, social, and other factors in its program development and decision-making processes. The environmental review process is intended to help Agency officials make decisions that are based on an understanding of the environmental consequences of a proposed action, and to take those actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment.

This paragraph contains a general discussion of basic environmental requirements. Detailed environmental policies and procedures can be found in RD Instruction 1940-G, which contains compliance requirements for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as well as numerous other laws, Executive Orders, and Departmental regulations on a variety of other environmental issues.

Environmental Library

At a minimum, each Field Office should maintain the following information in order to facilitate completion of environmental reviews. The State Environmental Coordinator can provide assistance in obtaining or understanding this information.

- The State’s Natural Resource Management Guide;
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain maps;
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Surveys and Important Farmland Soils; and
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Coastal Barrier Resource System maps (as applicable).

A. Types of Environmental Reviews

NEPA requires that Agency actions be classified into 3 basic categories of actions: those that normally qualify as categorical exclusions and generally require the preparation of a brief checklist; those that normally require an environmental assessment (EA); and those that normally require an environmental impact statement (EIS). Due to the wide range of activities funded by the Agency, it has been allowed to establish 2 categories of actions requiring an EA: Class I actions, requiring an EA with limited detail and analysis; and Class II actions, requiring a fully detailed EA. This classification of actions provides the Agency with a starting point for beginning its environmental review. Most single family housing activities will qualify as a categorical exclusion; some will qualify for a Class I EA. For a complete list of housing actions and their classifications, refer to RD Instruction 1940-G.



1. Categorical Exclusions

A categorical exclusion is an action that does not, individually or cumulatively, have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment, and therefore requires neither an EA nor an EIS, unless an extraordinary circumstance or cumulative impacts are involved. For each proposed action, a brief checklist, *Form RD 1940-22, Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions*, is prepared to ensure that the specific proposal under consideration does in fact qualify as a categorical exclusion and that there are no extraordinary circumstances or cumulative impacts.

In general, extraordinary circumstances are considered to exist when the proposed action is or will be located on or near and/or has the potential to affect environmentally sensitive land uses or resources. Exhibit 5-2 provides a listing of the most common land uses and resources that must be considered. RD Instruction 1940-G contains detailed information on the proper implementation of requirements affecting categorical exclusions.



Exhibit 5-2	
Environmentally Sensitive Land Uses and Resources	
Wetlands	Natural Landmarks
Floodplains	Important Farmland
Wilderness Areas	Prime Forest Land
Wild or Scenic Rivers	Prime Range Land
Historical, Archeological Sites	Coastal Zone Management Area
Critical Habitat or Endangered or Threatened Species	Sole Source Aquifer Recharge Area
Coastal Barriers	State Water Quality Standard

2. Environmental Assessment

If it appears that extraordinary circumstances and/or cumulative impacts may be involved, a Class I EA must be prepared using *Form RD 1940-21, Environmental Assessment for a Class I Action*. Through this form, the Agency provides the necessary documentation to: (1) demonstrate compliance with requirements for protection of the resource, including the development of practical alternatives to either avoid or lessen the environmental impact; and (2) demonstrate why the potential impact on the resources is not considered to be significant and therefore, an EIS is not required.

B. Flood Hazard Determination

FEMA Form 81-93, Standard Flood Hazard Determination, states whether or not the property is located in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) identified by FEMA and, if so, states the availability of flood insurance for this property through FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Property in a SFHA is *not eligible* for Federal financial assistance unless flood insurance through the NFIP is available. The information regarding floodplains on this form will assist in the preparation of the environmental review document, which must examine whether or not there is a reasonable alternative to a proposed purchase or construction in a floodplain. The Loan Originator will be responsible for accessing the *Flood Zone Determination Website* to obtain the FEMA Form 81-93 for each property. Certification will be a "*Life of Loan Determination*," in which the Agency will be notified should the site designation change. Attachment 5-D provides detailed instructions on accessing the website. The Standard Flood Hazard Determination must be completed in conjunction with and attached to the environmental review.

C. Responsibility for Environmental Reviews

The Loan Originator is responsible for completing the appropriate level of environmental review. This includes the assembly and analysis of relevant material, the development and analysis of practical alternatives and mitigation measures (as appropriate), and the development of recommendations regarding environmental impacts and environmental compliance. Applicants may be requested to provide information needed for the analysis.

The Loan Approval Official will use the environmental review documents and, as appropriate, the recommendations of the State Environmental Coordinator, to make the Agency's final decision regarding an environmental impact determination and compliance with environmental requirements, as well as flood insurance requirements. This decision is evidenced by execution of the "Finding" on *Form RD 1940-22*, for categorical exclusions or by execution of the Finding of No Significant Impact for EAs.

State Environmental Coordinators are available to provide technical assistance and guidance. They also are available to assist in problem resolution on environmental issues. Environmental questions or problems should be referred promptly to the State Environmental Coordinator.

Paragraph 5.8 Protection of Environmental Resources

D. Noise Abatement

If a site is located near a major source of noise (see Attachment 5-B, question 5), that information should be made available to the appraiser for consideration in the appraisal. The information should be made available to the applicant, who may not be aware of the problem. The applicant, once informed, may wish to look for a different site or to consider some method of noise reduction. The loan approval official should consult with the State Architect and the State Environmental Coordinator on any proposals for noise reduction.

5.9 Management of Hazardous Substances

The Agency must consider the management of hazardous substances, including hazardous wastes and petroleum products, from two perspectives: liability under hazardous substance and hazardous waste laws, and the economic risks posed by the presence of hazardous substances. Both of these issues are addressed through due diligence. Due diligence is the process of inquiring into the environmental condition of real estate, in the context of a real estate transaction, to determine the presence of contamination from hazardous substances, including hazardous wastes and petroleum products, and to determine what impact such contamination may have on the market value of the property.

When visiting a property, Agency staff members should be alert for any indication that hazardous substances might be present. Appraisers also are required to notify the Agency if they observe contamination from hazardous substances, or if information from research or interviews with individuals knowledgeable about the property indicates that the property might contain hazardous substances.

If an Agency staff member or an appraiser notices that a property may contain hazardous substances, or if the Agency has any other reason to suspect that a property is contaminated, the Loan Approval Official must initiate a due diligence review by completing the Transaction Screen Questionnaire, ASTM Standard E-1528 (TSQ), the initial level of inquiry in the due diligence process. If the completed TSQ raises any concerns, it must be sent to the State Environmental Coordinator for further evaluation and guidance.

SECTION 4: SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

5.10 Acceptable Mortgage

Generally, there should be no non-Agency liens on the property at the time of or immediately after closing, unless they are part of a formal leveraging strategy, or the Agency loan is for essential repairs and a senior lien secures an affordable non-Agency loan. However, the Loan Originator may accept prior or junior liens as long as: (1) the lien will not interfere with the purpose or repayment of the Agency loan; (2) the total value of all liens on the property is less than or equal to the property's market value; and (3) the prior lien does not contain provisions that may jeopardize the Agency's security position or the applicant's ability to repay the loan.

5.11 Ownership Requirements [7 CFR 3550.58]

If the applicant defaults on the loan, the Agency must be able to foreclose on the property to settle the debt. Therefore, after the loan is closed, the applicant must have an ownership interest in the property that is acceptable to the Agency.

A. Responsibilities

In preparation for closing, the closing agent selected by the applicant must review the ownership interest the applicant will have to ensure that it meets the requirements established by the Agency in RD Instruction 1927-B. The closing agent must also ensure that the form of ownership conforms with the requirements of relevant State laws. After closing, the Loan Originator should compare the deed of trust or mortgage with the title opinion to assess lien priority, to verify recordation of the date and time, and to ensure that the loan closing instructions have been followed.



B. Acceptable Forms of Ownership

Several forms of ownership are acceptable to the Agency, but in all cases the applicant's ownership interest must be carefully documented.



1. Fee-Simple Ownership

The most common form of ownership is fee-simple ownership, under which the borrower holds a fully marketable title to the property. This title is evidenced by a deed that vests full interest in the property to the borrower.

Land Purchase Contracts

When the ownership interest is by virtue of a land purchase contract, the ownership interest must be converted to a deed/mortgage interest prior to closing the loan.

2. Secure Leasehold Interest

Although fee-simple ownership is preferable, the borrower may have a secure leasehold interest in the property. Leasehold interests are acceptable only when all of the following conditions apply.

- The applicant must be unable to obtain fee-simple title to the property, and the rent charged for the lease must not exceed the rate being paid for comparable leases.
- The lessor must own the fee-simple title (this provision does not apply to a lessor who is an American Indian possessing a leasehold interest on tribal allotted or trust land).
- Neither the leasehold nor the fee-simple title may be subject to a prior lien unless the Agency authorizes acceptance of the prior lien before loan approval. The amount of the Agency’s loan, plus any prior liens, must not exceed the market value of the property including the value of the leasehold.
- The lease must be in writing, and must contain *all* of the following provisions:
 - ◊ The lessor’s consent to allow the Agency’s mortgage;
 - ◊ The right of the Agency to foreclose and sell the property without restrictions that adversely affect the market value of the property;
 - ◊ The right of the Agency to bid at a foreclosure sale or to accept voluntary conveyance of the property in lieu of foreclosure;

- ◇ The right of the Agency to occupy, sublet, or sell the property should the leasehold be acquired through foreclosure, voluntary conveyance, or abandonment;
 - ◇ The right of the applicant to transfer the leasehold and Agency mortgage to an eligible transferee who will assume the Agency's debt, if the borrower defaults or is unable to continue with the lease;
 - ◇ Advance written notice of at least 90 days to the Agency of the lessor's intention to cancel or terminate the lease;
 - ◇ Provisions are negotiated with the lessor before the leasehold interest is approved regarding the Agency's obligation to satisfy unpaid rent or other charges accrued before or during the time the Agency has possession of or title to the leasehold. During negotiations, the Loan Originator should consider the length of time it will take to foreclose, how much the Agency would be responsible for, and when the Agency would have to pay;
 - ◇ Provisions to ensure fair compensation to the borrower for any part of the property taken by condemnation; and
 - ◇ The unexpired term of the lease must be at least 150 percent of the term of the mortgage, unless the loan is guaranteed by a public authority, Indian Tribe, or Indian Housing Authority. For guaranteed loans, the unexpired term of the lease must be at least 2 years longer than the mortgage term. In no case may the unexpired term of the lease be less than 25 years.
- The language, specified in Attachment 5-C, must be inserted in the mortgage.

3. Life Estate Interest

The applicant may hold a life estate interest with the rights of present possession, control, and beneficial use of the property. All persons with any remainder interests in the property must be signatories to the mortgage, except as described in Paragraph 5.11 B.4.

4. Undivided Interest

To be eligible for a loan if an applicant only has an undivided interest in the land, co-owners must also be unable to provide or obtain the financing for the improvements, either individually or jointly with the applicant. Generally, all legally competent co-owners must sign the mortgage. However, when one or more of the co-owners cannot be located, are not legally competent (and there is no legal representative who can sign the mortgage), or if the ownership interests are divided among so many co-owners that it is not practical to mortgage all of their interests, their interests may be excluded from the security requirements, as long as their interests do not exceed 50 percent of the property’s value.

The loan amount shall be limited based on the percentage of the market value that is proportional to the percentage of the property interest owned by all persons signing the mortgage. The determination of market value should take into account any adverse effects that might result from selling mortgaged interests separately from nonmortgaged interests.


Only the State Director may approve the exclusion of co-owners’ interests. The Loan Originator or the Loan Approval Official should prepare a recommendation for the State Director’s review. The memo should include a full statement of ownership and the reasons for the proposed exclusion.

5. Possessory Rights

Possessory rights on an American Indian reservation or State-owned land, and the interest of an American Indian in land held in trust or deeds containing restrictions against alienation are acceptable forms of interest as long as the trust or restricted land will remain in trust or restricted status.

Tribal Allotted or Trust Land

Tribal allotted or trust land must remain in trust or restricted status. In these cases, the mortgage, deed of trust, leasehold interest or other security interest must be approved by the Secretary of the Interior. Each State should issue a supplement to give guidance about making loans under these circumstances.



5.12 EXCEPTIONS TO THE AGENCY'S SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

Exceptions may be made under the circumstances described below.

A. Unsecured (Note Only) Loans

A loan of less than \$7,500 that is scheduled for repayment within 10 years from the date of the loan may be secured by a promissory note alone as long as the applicant:

- Has a credit history that indicates an ability and willingness to pay the debt when due;
- Has principal, interest, taxes, and insurance (PITI) and total debt (TD) ratios that indicate that the applicant will have sufficient income to meet all obligations; *and*
- The applicant's equity in the real estate, as improved, equals or exceeds the amount of the proposed loan.

In order to verify the above conditions, the Loan Originator should review the applicant's credit history as described in Section 3 of Chapter 4. The applicant cannot receive payment subsidy on an unsecured loan.

B. Best Mortgage Obtainable

Except for unsecured loans described in Paragraph 5.12 A, loans must be secured by a mortgage. In addition, title clearance and the use of legal services as required by RD Instruction 1927-B are necessary, unless the total RHS indebtedness is less than \$7,500 or the loan is a subsequent loan made for minimal essential repairs necessary to protect the Government's interest.



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SECTION 5: APPRAISALS [7 CFR 3550.62]

5.13 OVERVIEW

High-quality appraisals are key to ensuring that the Agency obtains adequate security for its loans. This section provides guidance about the types of appraisals that may be needed, when appraisals are required, how they are ordered, and how they must be reviewed.

5.14 REQUIREMENTS FOR APPRAISAL

Appraisals must meet the following requirements:

- **Qualified Appraiser:** Direct Single Family Housing appraisal assignments will be completed by a state licensed appraiser. Contract appraisers must be licensed (or registered for Non-Resident Temporary Practice) in the state in which the subject property is located. When using a contract appraiser, the Agency will contract with qualified state licensed appraisers that are active on the Appraisal Subcommittee website (www.asc.gov). However, when a contract appraiser is not available at an acceptable cost or is unable to complete an appraisal timely, a qualified Agency appraiser may conduct the appraisal. For credit transactions that are \$100,000 or greater, Agency appraiser must possess the same qualifications as those required for contract appraisers, except that an Agency appraiser is only required to be certified in one State or Territory to perform real property appraisal duties as a Federal employee in all States and territories.
- **Standards:** All appraisals must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) available at www.appraisalfoundation.org and Agency appraisal requirements, as described in this chapter and in 7 CFR 3550.62(a).
- **Timelines:** The Loan Originator should order appraisals within 3 business days of an Agency determination that the property appears to be acceptable. Depending on the State, appraisals are conducted by either in-house Agency staff, or private appraisers under contract to the Agency. In-house appraisals are to be completed within 7 calendar days of receiving the appraisal order. Contract appraisals are to be completed within the time specified in the contract or Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA).
- **Nondiscrimination:** The appraiser may not use factors that are discriminatory on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin in conducting the appraisal and valuing the property.

Paragraph 5.14 Requirements for Appraisals

- **Use of Third Party Appraisals:** The Agency may use appraisals for which it did not contract, including those obtained by participating lending institutions. The Agency reviewer should be especially diligent in reviewing these appraisals to ensure they meet USPAP and Agency appraisal requirements.

5.15 TYPES OF VALUES

Depending on the purpose of the proposed loan, an appraiser will either give the estimated value of the property in its current condition (the “as is” value) or, based on construction plans and specifications, give the estimated value of the property after development (the “as improved” value). The Loan Originator will determine the required type of value. The circumstances under which each type of value is required are as follows.

- **As improved value.** Loans for planned new construction or rehabilitation require an estimate of the as improved value.
- **As is value.** Loans for existing dwellings (including a new construction dwelling that has been completed at the time of appraisal) requiring no repairs require an estimate of as-is value. As-is value appraisals may also be needed to support a loan servicing action or to determine a disposition plan for Real Estate Owned (REO) property.

5.16 APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY

Real estate appraisers make judgments about a property’s value based on many factors, including location, market conditions, construction quality, and amenities. Single Family Housing Appraisals require one, two, or three approaches to value, as described below, depending on the specific assignment.

- **Sales comparison approach.** Under this method, the appraiser uses the recent sales data of properties that are comparable in location and characteristics to the security property in order to estimate a market value for the property.
- **Cost approach.** Under this method, the appraiser derives an estimate of value using replacement cost estimates for the improvements, less depreciation and an estimate of the site value. The appraiser will identify the source of cost estimates, such as Marshall and Swift, used in the cost approach. The methodology used to estimate depreciation must be stated in the report. This method is required for new properties or properties that are less than one year old. The remaining economic life must be stated for all properties.

- **Income Approach.** Under this method the appraiser derives a value indication for an income-producing property by converting its anticipated benefits (cash flows and reversion) into property value. This conversion can be accomplished in two ways. One year's income expectancy can be capitalized at a market-derived capitalization rate or at a capitalization rate that reflects a specified income pattern, return on investment, and change in the value of the investment. Alternatively, the annual cash flows for the holding period and the reversion can be discounted at a specified yield rate. This method may only be used for Agency Non-Program Real Estate Owned Properties.

The appraisal must be completed using Fannie Mae Form 1004/Freddie Mac Form 70, "*Uniform Residential Appraisal Report*," for all one-unit, single family dwellings; Fannie Mae Form 1004C/Freddie Mac Form 70B, "*Manufactured Home Appraisal Report*," for all manufactured homes; or Fannie Mae Form 1073/Freddie Mac Form 465, "*Individual Condominium Unit Appraisal Report*" for all individual condominium units.

5.17 ORDERING APPRAISALS

A. When Appraisals Are Needed

An appraisal is always required if the RHS loan is \$7,500 or more and the Agency's debt plus prior liens against the property will exceed \$15,000. (Another lender's appraisal is acceptable when the loan is part of a leveraging strategy under certain circumstances as described in Chapter 10.) If the total indebtedness against the property is less than or equal to \$15,000, an appraisal is not required if the Loan Originator is confident that the property has sufficient value to serve as adequate security. Total indebtedness includes any prior liens on the property. The Loan Originator should include a statement of the property's value in the case file whenever an appraisal is not completed.

For subsequent loans, no appraisal is required if the loan is less than \$7,500 and is for minimal essential repairs needed to ensure that the dwelling is decent, safe, and sanitary. An appraisal is not required when a subsequent loan is made to protect the Government's interest, regardless of the amount. The Loan Originator must include a statement of the estimated property value in the case file. If the subsequent loan is for \$7,500 or more, no appraisal is needed unless the property will be taken as security and at least 1 of the following conditions exists:

- The latest appraisal report of the real estate is over 2 years old;
- The physical characteristics of the property have changed significantly;
- The Loan Originator is uncertain of the adequacy of the security; or
- The subsequent loan is in connection with a transfer of an existing loan.

B. Program Responsibilities

In accordance with RD Instruction 2024-A, contract services shall not involve decision making or other inherently Governmental functions. Accordingly, prior to initiating procurement action of appraisal of single family housing residential property, program personnel will conduct an on-site inspection of the dwelling and/or building site. The purpose of the inspection is to determine the following:

1. Suitability of the dwelling and/or site for retention in the program in accordance with 7CFR Part 3550.
2. Eligibility of the dwelling and/or site in accordance with 7 CFR Part 3550.
3. Environmental program compliance in accordance with RD Instruction 1940-G.
4. Repairs necessary to ensure the property meets the Agency's lending requirements. This list of repairs will be provided to the appraiser for the purpose of ensuring the appraisal reflects the "as-improved" value.

C. Required Information

When the Loan Originator or Staff Appraiser orders an appraisal, the appraiser should be provided with: (1) a copy of the option or sales agreement, with a legal description of the property; (2) a direction map; (3) certified building plans and specifications, and repair estimates, if applicable; (4) existing surveys; (5) a copy of the existing title; and (6) tax bills or assessments.

The applicant has until the expiration of their Certificate of Eligibility, as described in Paragraph 4.25, to present this information to the Loan Originator. Originals of this information should be kept in the case file, with copies provided to the appraiser.

D. Appraisal Disputes

In situations where an applicant disputes the results of the appraisal, the Loan Originator will send Handbook Letter 17 (3550), *Adverse Decision Involving an Appraisal*. Handbook Letter 17 informs the applicant of their opportunity to review the appraisal with the Local Office.

It also explains the applicant's right to a State Director review of the appraisal. If the State Director's review concurs with the original appraisal, the Loan Originator will send Handbook Letter 18 (3550), *Unfavorable Decision after State Director Review of an Appraisal*, with the appropriate attachment, to the applicant.

5.18 SELECTING AN APPRAISER

When a contract appraiser is to perform the appraisal, the contract appraiser must be selected following Agency contracting requirements. This may be achieved using a BPA or a Request for Contract services.

A. Blanket Purchase Agreement

A BPA allows the Agency to maintain a list of eligible contractors that can be engaged at any time. Regarding the BPA list of approved appraisers:

- The CO should develop a BPA list in accordance with Agency contracting procedures.
- When a contractor is needed, the Staff Appraiser or Loan Originator can contact an appraiser on the BPA list. At this time, the Staff appraiser or Designated Employee should:
 - ❖ Confirm that the contractor's price for the appraisal is within an acceptable range (based on experience with local costs).
 - ❖ Confirm that the appraiser can complete the appraisal within the required timeframe.
 - ❖ If the appraiser cannot meet these two criteria, the next appraiser on the list should be contacted, and the process should be repeated. When using the BPA list, appraisal staff or designated employee should make full use of the entire list. It is a good practice to rotate through the list to offer different appraisers the chance to perform the contract appraisal each time an appraisal is needed.

B. Request for Contract Services

The Agency may obtain appraisal services through a request for contract services. In this case, contracting staff will solicit bids for services and select the lowest responsive bid in

Paragraph 5.19 Working with the Appraiser

accordance with standard Agency contracting procedures. The CO will use the Statement of Work (SOW), developed by the appraisal staff, as the basis for the bid solicitation and the contract.

Once a contractor is selected, the CO or Contracting Officer Representative (COR) should arrange a post-award meeting with the contractor as described in Section 5.19 A.

5.19 WORKING WITH THE APPRAISER**A. Post-Award conference with the Appraiser**

Before authorizing the contractor to start work, the COR should discuss the contract SOW with the appraiser to ensure that the work to be performed is well understood. This may be done by telephone or in a face-to-face meeting. Following the discussion, the COR must provide the appraiser with the following items:

- Statement of Work. The SOW should include all the information that the appraiser needs to determine the scope of work of the appraisal assignment. This includes information on the purpose and intended use of the appraisal as well as all pertinent property information. See paragraph B below for a complete description of the information included in the SOW.
- List of repairs if an “as-improved” value is requested.
- Agency appraisal regulations and instructions. The appraiser should be provided with instructions for accessing, via the internet, 7 CFR Part 3550, and this chapter of the handbook.

B. The Statement of Work

At a minimum the SOW should describe the following:

- The intended use and intended users of the appraisal.
- The types of value required.

- Required submissions. The SOW should specify the number of copies to be delivered, the address (es) to which the reports should be sent and the deadline for delivery. Acceptance of electronic submissions will be determined by the State Director.

5.20 APPRAISER RESPONSIBILITIES

The appraiser must provide the required estimates of value on the appropriate form. The appraiser may also be asked to provide a list of repairs deemed essential for the property to be made decent, safe, and sanitary.

If an appraiser observes potential contamination from hazardous substances, hazardous wastes, or petroleum products on the property, or obtains other information about such contamination, that information should be provided to the Agency together with an indication of its potential impact on the value of the property. The Loan Originator must initiate the due diligence process by completing a *Transaction Screen Questionnaire (TSQ)*, ASTM E-1528. The completed TSQ must be sent promptly to the State Environmental Coordinator for further evaluation and guidance.

In-house appraisers must document comparable sales or complete *Form RD 1922-12, Nonfarm Tract Comparable Sales Data* for each comparable property considered. The in-house appraiser may use data from existing comparable sales or copies of *Form RD 1922-12* in conducting the sales comparison approach if the information is current and appropriate.

5.21 REVIEWING APPRAISALS

Appraisals will be reviewed for accuracy through a combination of administrative review and random spot-checks by State Appraisal Staff and Field Staff who have been assigned to this task. If an appraisal is found to be unacceptable by any review, other than a post review, the original appraiser can make corrections or a new appraisal can be ordered. The appraisal report must be acceptable before the loan-making process can continue.

A. Administrative Review

Administrative reviews are performed by the Loan Approval Official. They are to be performed on all contract appraisals and the contract appraiser's invoice cannot be paid until the appraisal review is complete. This review determined if there are inconsistencies in the appraisal report that warrant a future review of the property and the sales contract prior to loan approval, or if a technical review should be conducted by the staff appraiser prior to paying the appraiser's

Paragraph 5.21 Reviewing Appraisals

invoice. Indicators that a future review may be required consist of the following: (1) Photos and maps are not consistent with the information provided in the appraisal; (2) Large variances in actual and effective age are not supported; (3) Comparables are located outside of the subject's market area or they are superior/inferior to the subject warranting adjustments that will inflate the final value; (4) Sales and Financing concessions are not reported or comparables are not properly adjusted when they are reported; (5) History of the subject property was omitted or not analyzed; and (6) Inconsistent information in the appraisal. *Form RD 1922-15, Administrative Appraisal Review for Single Family Housing* should be used for this review. Once completed, the form should be signed, dated, and forwarded to the State Appraisal Staff. The review should be completed as soon as possible, but must be completed within 7 days of receipt of the appraisal.

B. Technical Review

A technical review is performed to determine whether the appraisal was complete, was clearly reasoned, and had adequate support for the conclusion of value. Technical reviews are performed by Agency licensed appraisers. Technical reviews completed by Agency appraisers must follow current USPAP requirements which can be found at www.appraisalfoundation.org.

Technical reviews are completed for the first appraisal conducted by any contract appraiser. At the discretion of the State Appraisal Staff, additional technical reviews may be ordered if concerns were encountered on the first technical review. In addition to the initial review, technical reviews will be done in a random, spot-check method established by the State Director for both contract and in-house appraisals.

A technical review also may be requested by the Loan Approval Official when concerns are detected by the administrative review. These concerns must be significant and/or result in an appraisal that does not support the value. The concerns will be documented on *Form RD 1922-15*. The State Appraisal Staff must determine if the concerns merit a technical review before the appraiser can be paid or the loan approved.

C. Field Review

Field reviews involve on-site visits to the subject property and the comparables, and are completed by State Appraisal Staff on a random, spot-check basis to determine whether the contract appraiser has followed accepted appraisal techniques and arrived at a logical conclusion. Field reviews will be performed for each appraiser that does multiple appraisals in a 12-month period as determined by the State Director. Each contract appraiser should be

reviewed at least once in a 3-year period. When an applicant appeals the results of an appraisal, a field review will be completed prior to the appeal hearing. A *USPAP Standard 3 Review* is used for field reviews, as well as for technical reviews.

5.22 PAYING FOR APPRAISALS

The Agency will charge a \$325 fee for each loan application that requires an appraisal. Within 3 business days of receiving a completed application, the Loan Originator will provide the applicant with *Form RD 440-58, Estimate of Settlement Costs*, which includes the amount of the appraisal fee.

At the applicant orientation described in Paragraph 8.6 A.1., the applicant must decide whether to finance the appraisal fee or pay it out of their own funds. If the fee is financed, the Loan Originator should include it in *Form RD 1940-41, Truth in Lending Statement*. In these cases, the total indebtedness may exceed the property value and Area Loan limit by the amount of the appraisal fee.



The Agency may waive the fee for appraisals done for subsequent loans needed to make minimal, essential repairs necessary to protect the Government's interest, or for leveraged loans if a participating lender is obtaining an appraisal that is acceptable to the Agency.

If there is a conditional commitment, the appraisal fee should be paid to the contractor at closing as reimbursement for the cost of the appraisal that was included in the conditional commitment fee.

5.23 APPRAISALS IN REMOTE RURAL AREAS, ON TRIBAL LANDS, OR WHERE THERE IS A LACK OF MARKET ACTIVITY

In remote rural areas, on Tribal lands, or areas with a lack of market activity it may be difficult to obtain adequate comparables to appraise a property. In these areas, the sales comparison approach is not required. Instead, *Form 1007, Marshall and Swift Square Foot Appraisal Form* must be used. These appraisals may be conducted by Agency staff appraisers or by contract appraisers.

Remote rural areas are identified by the State Director and are defined as areas with all of the following characteristics:

- Scattered population;
- Low density of residences;

Paragraph 5.23 Appraisals in Remote Rural Areas, on Tribal Lands,
or Where There is a Lack of Market Activity



- Lack of basic shopping facilities;
- Lack of community and public services and facilities; and
- Lack of comparable sales data.

The results of the cost analysis completed using *Form 1007* should be documented on the *Uniform Residential Appraisal Report* and efforts to obtain comparable market data must be documented in lieu of the sales comparison approach. External depreciation based on the remoteness of the site must not be considered; however, factors that impact the site such as immediate proximity to a feedlot, factory, or other similar considerations should be included. When a market is established in these areas, the Agency will again require complete appraisals.

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SECTION 6: MANAGING CONSTRUCTION

5.24 DESIGN

A. Disseminating the Standards

The applicant needs to know the standards the dwelling must meet before the design process begins. The Loan Originator should advise the applicant of the Agency's rehabilitation or construction standards.

The applicant and/or designer should also be provided with *Form RD 1924-2, Description of Materials*, prior to loan approval. This form may be used by the designer as a basis for preparing specifications. When other suitable specifications are available which will adequately describe the materials, equipment, and fixtures to be used on the job, this form need not be used.

B. Review and Approve the Drawings and Specifications

Once the drawings and specifications are finished, the Loan Originator should review them to ensure that they have been certified as meeting the Agency's minimum standards contained in RD Instruction 1924-A. The plans, specifications, calculations, and any modifications should be certified by the design professional on *Form RD 1924-25, Plan Certification*, to ensure that the appropriate codes and standards are met. If all applicable requirements are met, the Loan Originator may accept the documents. If they do not meet the applicable requirements, the Loan Originator should inform the applicant and designer, in writing, of the deficiencies or discrepancies. Once these issues are resolved, the Loan Originator should review the drawings and specifications again.



5.25 PREPARING FOR CONSTRUCTION

A. Selecting the Contractor

The applicant should select the contractor who will build or rehabilitate the dwelling. The contractor must have a valid State contractor's license if required in the State, and such license must be documented by the Loan Originator. The Loan Originator must also verify the validity of the license with the appropriate State entity and document the applicant's file. For new construction, the applicant will usually have a contractor in mind. For rehabilitation, the applicant should solicit a minimum of 3 bids, when this is feasible. If there is not a sufficient number of contractors in the area, the Local Office must be sure to review the bids that are obtained to ensure the bids are reasonable. A detailed set of specifications must be developed


prior to obtaining bids. Detailed Specifications must include a complete breakdown on materials and labor and describe the quantity, quality, grades, styles, model numbers, etc. to clearly identify the work and materials to be furnished. Bids should be solicited based on the developed set of specifications. Occasionally, the applicant may need help to find a suitable contractor. If the Agency maintains a list of contractors, this list can be provided.

If the applicant selects a contractor with whom the Field Office is not familiar, the Loan Originator should:

- Interview the contractor and inspect homes they have recently built;
- Obtain a certified financial statement;
- Obtain, at the contractor's expense, a commercial credit report on the firm and consumer credit reports on each of the principals;
- Check with the local consumer protection agency or Better Business Bureau for any complaints about the builder; and
- Talk to other homeowners about their experiences with the builder.

B. Pre-Construction Conference

Once the contractor has been selected, the Agency, the applicant, the designer (if applicable), and the contractor should hold a pre-construction conference. The purpose of the conference is to ensure that each party understands their respective roles and responsibilities. The parties should review the drawings and specifications to make sure everyone understands the scope of work, construction/thermal standards, environmental mitigation requirements, materials, inspection, change orders, and payment procedures.

For new construction, the Loan Originator should provide Exhibits F and G of RD Instruction 1924-A to the contractor at or before the preconstruction conference.  These exhibits give details on the completion assurance (surety) that the contractor can elect to obtain. The Loan Originator also should provide the “*Equal Employment Is The Law*” poster, which explains the requirements of applicable fair labor standard laws to the contractor to post at the construction site.

The Loan Originator should prepare an agenda before the meeting and take minutes during the meeting. All parties should review and sign these minutes to indicate their approval. The Loan Originator may use *Form RD 1924-16, Record of Pre-Construction Conference*, as a basis for preparing the agenda and recording the minutes, but the form itself is not a required document.

Paragraph 5.25 Preparing for Construction

To prepare for loan closing, the contractor and applicant should undertake any pre-construction activities necessary to ensure that construction can begin shortly after closing. This might include getting building permits and lining up material suppliers.

C. Construction Contract

For new construction, a written construction contract is always required. Written contracts are strongly recommended for all rehabilitation-related construction, and are required if there is construction work involved that would affect the dwelling's structural integrity (otherwise, a rehabilitation plan with cost estimates and specifications may be used). The applicant and contractor must sign the construction contract at the loan closing, or within 5 business days after closing.

The Agency is not a party to this contract; however, the Agency provides many forms that should be used and attached to the contract, including:

- *Form RD 1924-6, Construction Contract;*
- *Form RD 400-1, Equal Opportunity Agreement;*
- *Form RD 400-3, Notice to Contractors and Applicants; and*
- *Form RD 400-6, Compliance Statement.*

D. Department of Labor Notification

For contracts greater than \$10,000, the Loan Originator must prepare a letter within 10 days after the contract is signed to notify the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) of the execution. The letter notifies the U.S. Department of Labor of the contract period and amount, and the contractor's name, address, and employer identification number. Exhibit C of RD Instruction 1901-E provides a format for the Loan Originator to use. To obtain the most current regional address, visit the DOL web site at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/contacts/ofccp/ofcpkeyp.htm>.



5.26 CONSTRUCTION PERIOD

Once the construction contract is in place, construction can begin. All construction work should be inspected periodically in accordance with RD Instruction 1924-A to ensure that the work is done properly. An adult member of the household should attend all inspections and be available to sign checks for the work performed.



A. Qualified Inspector

Construction work may be inspected by the Loan Approval Official, the Loan Originator, or a qualified third party. The Agency inspector must be qualified to do a construction inspection. A qualified third party includes a State-licensed inspector who inspects property according to a model code acceptable to the Agency, or an inspector certified by one of the following:

- International Congress of Building Officials (ICBO);
- Southern Building Code Congress International, Inc. (SBCCI);
- Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA); and/or
- Council of American Building Officials (CABO).


If inspections are conducted by a third party, the inspector should submit periodic inspection reports to the Agency (as described below). In the case of a county building inspector, the Loan Originator should request copies of the inspector's reports to be maintained in the file.

B. Periodic Inspections

The number and timing of inspections varies by the type and extent of work performed.


- **New construction and rehabilitation.** The Agency's inspector may conduct as many inspections as necessary, but a minimum of 3 generally are required: (1) footings while under construction; (2) after the dwelling is framed-in; and (3) a final inspection once all work is complete. In some cases, such as when rehabilitation only involves replacing a roof, the footing inspection is not required.

After each inspection, the inspector should complete and maintain in the file *Form RD 1924-12, Inspection Report*.



**Borrower's Responsibility
for Inspection**

The borrower is responsible for making inspections to protect his or her interest. The Agency's inspections are not intended to assure the borrower that the house is built according to the approved plans and specifications.



New Dwellings

If the borrower is purchasing a new dwelling, the Agency may accept the dwelling as "decent, safe, and sanitary" as long as the contractor provides a Certificate of Occupancy or other documents deemed acceptable by the State Office. The certificate alone, however, is not sufficient to justify 100 percent loan-to-value.

Paragraph 5.26 Construction Period

- **Minor rehabilitation.** All rehabilitation work must be inspected, but the Agency does not prescribe guidelines for inspecting rehabilitation work that does not involve new construction (such work might include repairing walls, painting, or installing carpet). The inspector should inspect the work at intervals that are appropriate for the extent of the repair work. Each Field Office should set its own schedule for inspections. The Loan Originator should maintain a record of the inspections conducted with the results. The inspector may use *Form RD 1924-12*, or another format that provides comparable information.
- **Environmental requirements.** If environmental mitigation measures are required, the Agency’s inspector should follow up on the implementation of such measures and document compliance on *Form RD 1924-12*. Noncompliance with environmental mitigation measures should be reported to the Loan Originator and State Environmental Coordinator promptly.

C. Partial Payments

Partial payments for work completed can be issued after each inspection. The contractor and Loan Originator establish a draw schedule before loan closing. This schedule identifies when partial payments may be made, based on the amount of work completed. The amount of the payment is typically based on the value of the work, according to Exhibit A of RD Instruction 1924-A, or the Marshall and Swift guidelines. To ensure that all work will be satisfactorily completed, 40 percent of each payment request is typically withheld until the work is complete and final payment is made, as described in Paragraph 5.27. The amount withheld can be reduced to 10 percent if the contractor obtains a Surety Bond, Performance Bond, or Payment Bond, but this is extremely rare.

Example - Partial Payments

A contractor submits a payment request for \$25,000 for work completed. The loan official prepares a payment for \$15,000 (60 percent of the request), and withholds \$10,000 (40 percent).



D. Changes During Construction

If changes to the approved drawings and specifications are required during construction, the applicant and contractor must sign *Form RD 1924-7, Contract Change Order*. All modifications must be certified on *Form RD 1924-25, Plan Certification*, if the modification is regulated by the applicable development standard. Before signing it, however, the Loan Approval Official must review and sign the change order to ensure that the change fits within the approved loan amount. If the change order does not fit within the approved loan amount, several courses of action are possible:

- If the change is necessary and the borrower has repayment ability, the Agency may make a subsequent loan for the amount required to pay for the change;
- The scope of work may be scaled back to accommodate the change;
- The Agency may increase the loan amount if it can be supported by the appraisal, the cost of the property remains below the applicable area loan limit, and the borrower has repayment ability; or
- The borrower may be required to provide additional cash.


The environmental review for the project must be amended if there are changes to plan and specifications during construction (with or without the provision of additional financial assistance), which will alter the purpose, operation, location, or design of the project as originally approved.

5.27 CONSTRUCTION CLOSEOUT

Once construction and rehabilitation work is satisfactorily completed, the Agency will make final payment to the contractor. Before that can occur, the Loan Originator must ensure that the work has been done properly and that no one will make any claims against the property (such as dissatisfied subcontractors). The Agency provides several forms to help the Loan Originator close out the construction process, as listed below.

- **Certificate of Contractor's Release.** *Form RD 1924-9, Certificate of Contractor's Release* must be signed by the contractor; it certifies that the work has been completed according to the drawings and specifications and the Agency's standards.
- **Release by Claimants.** The contractor must have each subcontractor used during construction sign *Form RD 1924-10, Release by Claimants*. It certifies that the contractor has paid each subcontractor and that there are no outstanding claims against the property for work performed.
- **Builder's warranty.** A warranty is a guarantee of the quality of work or materials. The Agency must have a copy of 1 of the 2 acceptable forms of builder's warranties as listed below (the applicant keeps the original).

Paragraph 5.27 Construction Closeout

- ◇ *Form RD 1924-19, Builder's Warranty* is a 1-year warranty provided to the borrower by the contractor after the construction work has been accepted by the borrower and the Agency. A builder's warranty is issued for new construction (or rehabilitation involving construction) that has had appropriate periodic inspections conducted by the Agency (or third party). The warranty guarantees that the builder will repair or replace any defects in materials or construction that occur within 1 year from the date of acceptance. CSC will be responsible for notifying the borrower of the expiration of the builder's warranty within eleven months of acceptance of the final inspection.
- ◇ An insured 10-year warranty, as described in Exhibit L of RD Instruction 1924-A, is an insurance policy issued by a third party. It is purchased by the builder and insures the borrower against builder defaults and/or major structural defects. This policy is typically used when the borrower is purchasing an existing, newly constructed dwelling and the Agency does not have acceptable documentation of construction quality. 
- **Other documentation.** The Agency should maintain the following documentation, if applicable:
 - ◇ Certificate of Occupancy (in some localities, a certificate of occupancy from the local regulatory agency is required before a new or renovated structure may be occupied);
 - ◇ Copies of building permits;
 - ◇ *Form RD 1924-25, Plan Certification*;
 - ◇ Certifications regarding the adequacy of all systems, as described in Paragraph 5.7 A.; and
 - ◇ Additional certifications and warranties, including insulation, carpet, and major appliances.
 - ◇ Thirty days after the final inspection and issuance of the Builder's Warranty, the Loan Originator will send Guide Letter 1924-1 of RD Instruction 1924-F informing the borrower that financial assistance may be available to them under the Compensation for Construction Defects Program.

5.28 SPECIAL SITUATIONS

A. Funds Remaining After Completion

When all planned construction or rehabilitation work has been completed, remaining loan funds may be used for any additional authorized loan purposes agreed upon by the applicant and the Agency. The Loan Originator must document the purposes for which the funds disbursed to the borrower will be used. The Loan Originator should adjust the development plan accordingly. Once the work is complete, the Loan Originator should maintain documentation of the work performed, such as invoices and receipts for materials, equipment or supplies. If no agreement can be reached, the Agency should apply the funds to the borrower's outstanding principal balance.

B. Construction Work that Cannot be Completed

If construction or rehabilitation work cannot be completed because the contractor is unable or unwilling to do so, and the applicant is unable to obtain another contractor (even with the Agency's assistance), funds should be applied to reduce the borrower's principal balance.

C. Deceased Borrowers

If a borrower dies before funds are disbursed for completed construction or rehabilitation work, the Loan Originator may authorize payment for work completed when there is written evidence (such as a letter) that the work was accepted as complete and satisfactory by the borrower or an authorized representative, and an authorized Agency representative has inspected the work and found it satisfactory. The authorized representative can endorse the check on behalf of the deceased borrower. If there is no authorized representative or the contractor files a mechanics lien, advice from the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) should be sought to ensure the Agency's interests are protected.

D. Compensation for Construction Defects

For newly built dwellings, the Government may pay for major defects in dwelling construction that are not repaired adequately by the builder (such defects are usually the result of poor workmanship and the contractor refuses to repair the defect or the repairs are inadequate). To be eligible, the borrower must submit a claim to the Field Office within 18 months after the date the borrower signs the final inspection report. Guidance on how to notify borrowers of this policy, as well as instructions on how to implement the policy, can be found in RD Instruction 1924-F. This option should only be used as a last resort after all other actions to correct the defects have failed.



ATTACHMENT 5-A

CHECKLIST FOR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING HOUSING

Applicant's Name Property Address

This checklist can be used for an initial assessment of an existing dwelling. Check “Yes” or “No” to indicate whether each element is in satisfactory condition. If an element does not exist, note “NA” in the comments column. If you need additional space to describe your observations, use the attached comment sheet.

Yes	No	Comments	Comments
		1. Streets. The site is accessible from a hard surfaced or all weather road in compliance with local requirements.	
		2. Walks and Driveway. The driveway is adequate. The walks pose no safety hazard.	
		3. Utilities. The house has adequate, safe, dependable utilities with sufficient easements.	
		4. Foundation. The foundation is sound, with no evidence of subsidence and with no cracks, or evidence of moisture intrusion into basements, slabs, or crawlspaces. The grade at the foundation provides positive drainage away from the house.	
		5. Exterior Walls. Exterior walls do not exhibit signs of structural fatigue, failure, or excessive bowing. The siding is free of any rot or paint that is loose, peeling, chipping, scaling, or cracking. Vinyl or aluminum siding is free of mildew. Brick or stone veneer is sound and exhibits no displacement.	
		6. Exterior Doors And Trim. All exterior doors, including sliding doors, have functional locks. All exterior doors are energy efficient, and are in good repair, including hardware.	
		7. Garages. The garage is in sound condition with no obvious defects. The garage door is functional. If the garage is an attached garage the required 1 hour fire wall is in place and properly maintained.	
		8. Porches/Decks. The porches/decks are sound with no deterioration.	

Yes	No		Comments
		9. Roof. The roof is free of leaks. The existing roof is expected to last for a minimum of 5 years.	
		10. Gutters And Downspouts. The gutters and downspouts are installed properly with splashblocks at the end of each downspout.	
		11. Framing. Floor, subflooring, ceiling joists, and partition framing are sound and exhibit no structural deficiencies.	
		12. Interior Walls And Ceilings. The walls and ceilings exhibit no bowing, sagging, or obvious defects. Wallcovering is adequate, with no loose, scaling, peeling, or chipping paint.	
		13. Interior Doors And Trim. The doors are free of holes and other serious damage. Trim is sound, with no broken or missing pieces.	
		14. Windows. The windows are functional and adequate and are energy efficient. There is no broken or cracked glazing, or loss of glazing compound, and all windows are lockable. Bedroom windows meet egress requirements.	
		15. Floor Covering. The floor covering is not damaged, heavily worn, or soiled. The existing floor covering is expected to last for a minimum of 5 years.	
		16. Cabinets And Vanity. The kitchen cabinets and counter tops are sound, with functional doors and drawers. The bathroom vanity is sound, with functional doors and drawers.	
		17. Stairs. All stairs are sound and exhibit no structural deficiencies. All stairs with 3 or more risers have a handrail unless the state building code prescribes a different standard.	
		18. Plumbing. The plumbing is functional and adequate.	
		19. Heating And Air Conditioning. The heating and air conditioning, including exhaust fans, are functional and adequate.	
		20. Electric Wiring. The electrical components are functional and adequate.	
		21. Sump Pumps. All sump pumps are functional and in compliance with local regulations.	
		22. Pests. The house is free of termites and other wood damaging pests and organisms.	
		23. Miscellaneous. Any other factors that are noted during the assessment.	

Rural Development Official

Date

NOTE: Any problems identified must be cured with loan funds or before loan closing.

Item Number	Additional Comments

ATTACHMENT 5-B
SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING SITE CHECKLIST
(To be used with New and Existing Dwellings)

Applicant's Name _____

Property Address _____

Name of Subdivision: _____

Note: If the answer is "YES," provide comments and discuss with the appropriate State Office technical staff (Architect, Engineer, or State Environmental Coordinator) for further evaluation and guidance. The presence of any of the following conditions must be considered in the appraised value.

1. SITE SUITABILITY, ACCESS, AND COMPATIBILITY WITH SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT

Has the site been used as a dump, sanitary landfill, or mine waste disposal area? () Yes () No

Is there indication of:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
distressed vegetation	()	()	oil/chemical spills	()	()
waste material/containers	()	()	abandoned machinery, cars,		
soil staining, pools of liquid	()	()	refrigerators, etc.	()	()
loose/empty drums, barrels	()	()	transformers, fill/vent pipes,		
			pipelines, drainage structures	()	()

Are there other unusual conditions on site which might indicate potential for contamination from hazardous waste, hazardous substances, or petroleum products? () Yes () No

Note: Complete a Transition Screen Questionnaire, if a "YES" answer is given to any of the above three items, before proceeding further with this application.

Is the site compatible with surrounding area in terms of:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Land use	()	()	Building type	()	()
Height, bulk, mass	()	()	Building density	()	()

Will the site be unduly influenced by:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Building deterioration	()	()	Transition of land uses	()	()
Postponed maintenance	()	()	Incompatible land uses	()	()
Obsolete public facilities	()	()	Inadequate off-street parking	()	()

2. SOIL STABILITY, EROSION, AND DRAINAGE

Slopes: () Not applicable () Steep () Moderate () Slight

Is there evidence of slope erosion or unstable slope conditions on or near the site? () Yes () No

Is there evidence of ground subsidence, high water table, or other unusual conditions on the site?
 () Yes () No

Is there any visible evidence of soil problems (foundations cracking or settling, basement flooding, etc.) in the neighborhood of this site? () Yes () No

Have soil studies or boring been made for the site or the area? () Yes () No () Unknown

Do the soil studies or boring indicate marginal or unsatisfactory soil conditions? () Yes () No

Is there indication of cross-lot runoff, swales, drainage flows on the property? () Yes () No

Are there visual indications of filled ground? () Yes () No

Are there active rills and gullies on site? () Yes () No

If the site is not to be served by a municipal waste water disposal system, has a report of the soil conditions suitable for on-site septic systems been submitted? () Yes () No () Not Applicable

3. NUISANCES AND HAZARDS

Will the site be affected by natural hazards:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Faults, fracture	()	()	Fire hazard materials	()	()
Cliffs, bluffs, crevices	()	()	Wind/sand storm concerns	()	()
Slope-failure from rains	()	()	Poisonous plants, insects, animals	()	()
Unprotected bodies of water	()	()	Hazardous terrain features	()	()

Will the site be affected by built hazards and nuisances:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Hazardous street	()	()	Railroad crossing	()	()
Dangerous intersection	()	()	Inadequate screened		
Through traffic	()	()	drainage catchments	()	()
Inadequate separation			Hazards in vacant lots	()	()
of pedestrian/vehicle traffic	()	()	Chemical tank-car terminals	()	()
Traffic way	()	()	Other hazardous chemical storage	()	()
Inadequate street lighting	()	()	High-pressure gas or liquid		
Quarries			petroleum transmission		
or other excavations	()	()	lines on site	()	()
Dumps/sanitary landfills or			Overhead transmission lines	()	()
mining	()	()	Hazardous cargo		
Heavy industry	()	()	transportation routes	()	()
Incinerators	()	()	Oil or gas wells	()	()
Power generating plants	()	()	Industrial operations	()	()
Oil refineries	()	()	Cement plants	()	()

Will the site be affected by nuisances:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Gas, smoke, fumes	()	()	Unsightly land uses	()	()
Odors	()	()	Abandoned vehicle	()	()
Vibration	()	()	Vermin infestation	()	()
Vacant/boarded-up			Industrial nuisances	()	()
buildings	()	()	Other _____	()	()

4. WATER SUPPLY, SANITARY SEWERS, AND SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Is the site served by an adequate and acceptable:

- water supply () Yes () No () Municipal () Private;
- sanitary sewers and waste disposal systems () Yes () No () Municipal () Private;
- and trash collection and solid waste disposal () Yes () No () Municipal () Private.

If the water supply is non-municipal, has an acceptable "system" been approved by appropriate authorities and agencies?

Yes No

If the sanitary sewers and waste water disposal systems are non-municipal, has an acceptable "system" been approved by appropriate authorities and agencies?

Yes No

5. NOISE ABATEMENT

Is the site located near a major noise source, i.e., civil airports (within 5 miles), military airfields (15 miles), major highways or busy roads (within 1000 feet), or railroads (within 3000 feet)? Yes No

6. AIRPORT HAZARDS

Is the project within 3,000 feet from the end of a runway at a civil airport? Yes No

Is the project within 2-1/2 miles from the end of a runway at a military airfield? Yes No

7. OTHER CONDITIONS

Are there any field conditions not specified above that would adversely affect the acceptability of the lots/sites? Yes No

Inspected By

Date

ITEM NUMBER	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

ATTACHMENT 5-C
AMENDMENTS TO MORTGAGES WITH LEASEHOLD INTEREST

The following paragraphs must be inserted in the mortgage. The first paragraph should be placed directly before the legal description of the real estate.

“All Borrower’s right, title, and interest in and to the leasehold estate for a term of _____ years beginning on _____, 20____, created, executed and established by certain Lease dated _____, 20____, by _____, Page _____ of _____ Records of said County and State, and any renewals and extensions thereof, and all Borrower’s right, title, and interest in and to said Lease, covering the following real estate.”

“Borrower will pay when due all rents and any and all other charges required by said Lease, will comply with all other requirements of said Lease, and will not surrender or relinquish, without the Government’s written consent, any of Borrower’s right, title, or interest in or to said leasehold estate or under said Lease while this instrument remains in effect.”

ATTACHMENT 5-D

WEB ACCESS INSTRUCTIONS TO OBTAIN FLOOD HAZARD DETERMINATIONS

BACKGROUND: The Rural Housing Service (RHS) has contracted with a private vendor to provide Flood Hazard Determination Certifications through an Internet based system for **all Section 502 and 504 loans with an original principal balance more than \$5,000 and a repayment term of one year or more. This also includes 504 grants more than \$5000.** All files must contain a copy of the certification prior to loan approval. This service provides RHS not only with the initial determination, but will also include life-of-the-loan coverage (as new flood zones are identified, the vendor notifies the Centralized Servicing Center of the change and the requirement for flood insurance). **A Flood zone determination request should be made at the time of the initial site visit. If not, a request must be made prior to or at the time of ordering the appraisal.**

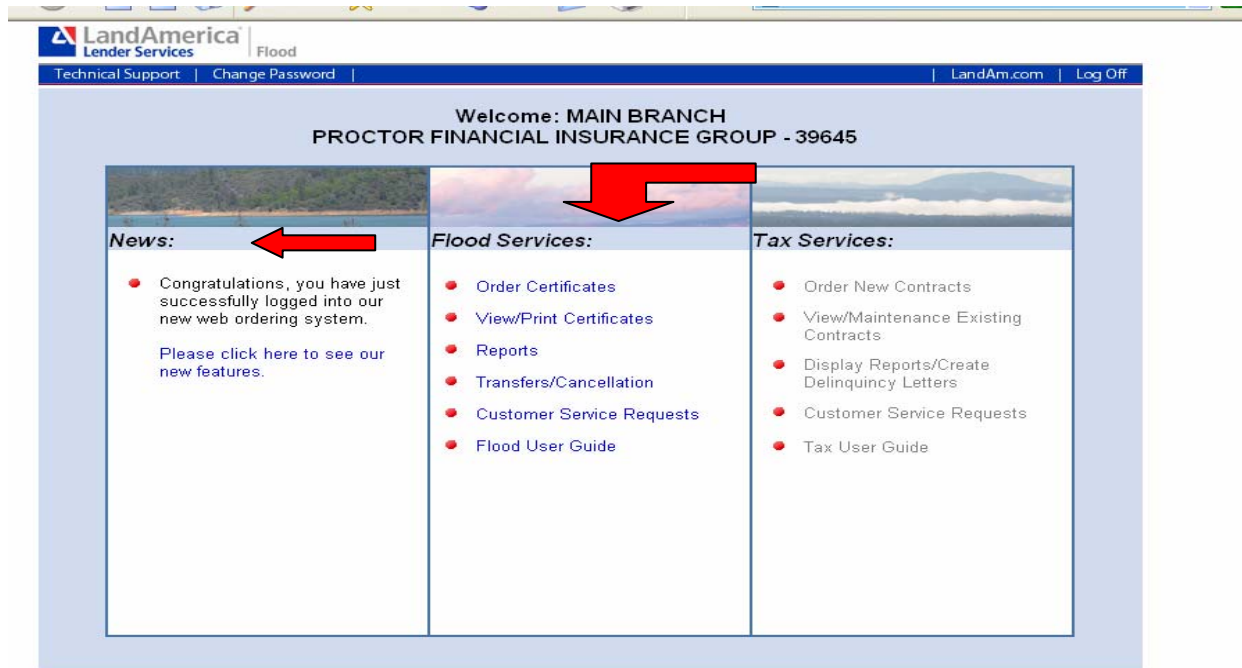
1. Log into the web site at: www.LATFnet.com.
2. Individual user IDs and passwords were setup and distributed in August of 2006. To establish an individual user ID and password for an employee, the State Office should contact the Escrow and Front-End Management Branch of CSC with the employee's full name, e-mail address, office address, phone number, fax number, and five-digit servicing branch code. Existing users experiencing problems with logging into the system should call LandAmerica's Help Desk at (877) 377-4577 or by e-mail at LATFnetTechSupport@landam.com.
3. Click "Submit"

The screenshot shows the LandAmerica Lender Services Tax and Flood website. The page has a blue header with the LandAmerica logo and navigation links. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Login Form:** A light blue box containing the text "To login, please enter your User ID and Password". It has two input fields labeled "User ID:" and "Password:". Below the fields are "Submit" and "Clear" buttons. A red arrow points to the "Submit" button. There is also a "Payment Services by VeriSign" logo.
- Notice:** A red heading followed by text: "Your existing LeretaNet User ID and Password is the same for this new LATFnet web page. If you do not have your own User ID and Password, please contact your Account Manager."
- Information Requests:** A heading followed by text: "If you would like information on becoming a LandAmerica Services customer, contact (866) 353-7382 Ext 102 or Email Request Information".
- What's New at LandAmerica Lender Services Tax and Flood?:** A heading followed by text: "Our new web site! If you would like to sign up for a web-based training session, please call Christine at (866) 353-7382 Ext 113."
- System Requirements for this ordering system:** A heading followed by the text "Check your browser version" and three icons with links: "Download Internet Explorer 6.0 (preferred)", "Download Netscape 7.2", and "Download Adobe Reader".

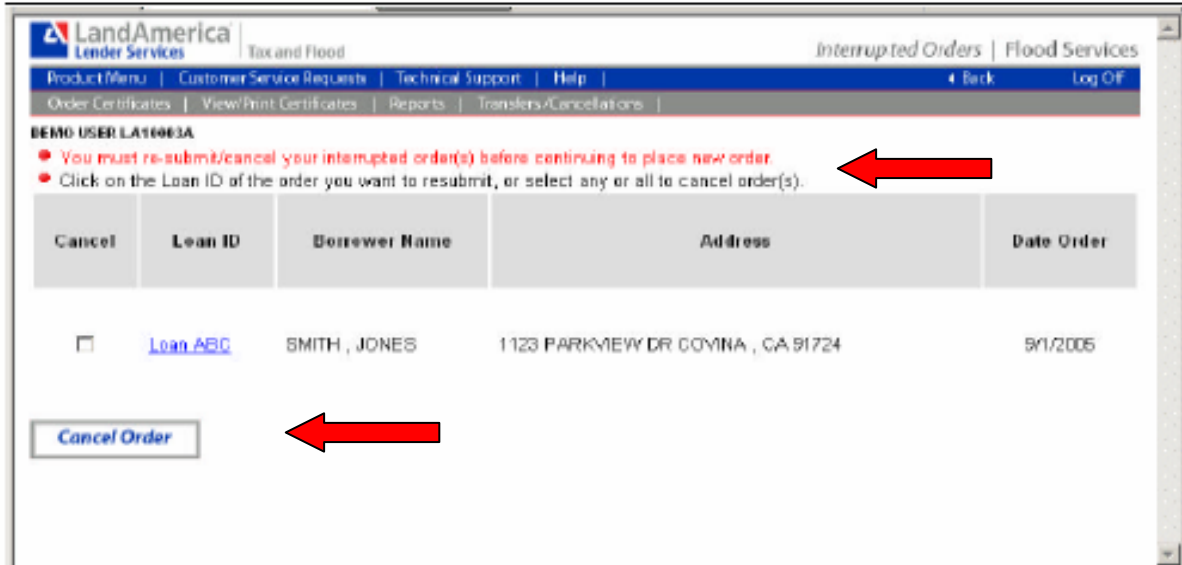
4. The Main Menu may contain five choices, “**Order Certificates,**” “**View/Print Certificates,**” “**Reports,**” “**Transfers/Cancellations,**” “**Customer Service Requests,**” and “**Flood User Guide.**”

NOTE: More detailed instruction on the web site may be found by clicking on “Flood User Guide.”



5. **News:** Visit this Main Menu option to display any new features/enhancements made to the web site before continuing with your operation.

6. **Resubmit Interrupted Orders:** This Main Branch option will display only if there was a system interruption when the order was placed. If this option is not displayed, there are no interrupted orders pending. To utilize this function, **click “Resubmit Interrupted Orders”** on the Main Menu. The following screen will appear:



7. Review any orders listed. You will have the choice to resubmit the order or cancel the order. To resubmit, **click** on the **Loan ID** and the original order will proceed with either an automatic or manual search. You may also **click** “*Cancel Order.*”

8. **Order Certificates:** Click "Order Certificate" on the Main Menu. The following screen will be displayed:

LandAmerica Lender Services | Flood | Order Certificates | Flood Services

Product Menu | Customer Service Requests | Technical Support | Back | Log Off

Order Certificates | View/Print Certificates | Reports | Transfers /Cancellations | Automation Tips

MAIN BRANCH

Shaded areas indicate required information.

Contact Name: BRANCH MAIN | **Phone:** 000-000-0000
Email Address: | **Fax Number:** 000-000-0000
Cc:Email Address: | **Cc:Email Address:**

The above user information is to help us contact you, if necessary. Please contact your account manager if you have any changes.

Loan ID: [Shaded] | **Service Type:** Certification and LOL Tracking
Loan Type: Purchase | **Cost Center:** 24885 USDA
Property Type: Residential

Borrower: [Shaded] Last | [] First | [] MI
2nd Borrower: []
or Entity: []

New Construction | Vacant Lot
* If the House # is unknown, please enter TBD in the house # field.
* If the Zip Code is unknown, please enter 00000 in the Zip code field.
The State is necessary to expedite your order.

Property Address: [Shaded] House # | [Shaded] Street | [Shaded] Zip | [] City | [] State
Example: 12345 | E Main St | 54215-5555 | Covina | CA

Legal Description: [] Lot/Sec | [] Blk/Twp | [] Tract/Rng

Additional Legal: []

or Attach file: [] Browse...
(Max file size 500 characters. Accepted file format is .TXT and .PDF only.)

Parcel or Tax ID: []

Latitude: [] | **Longitude:** []
Example: 378.000000 | -972.000000

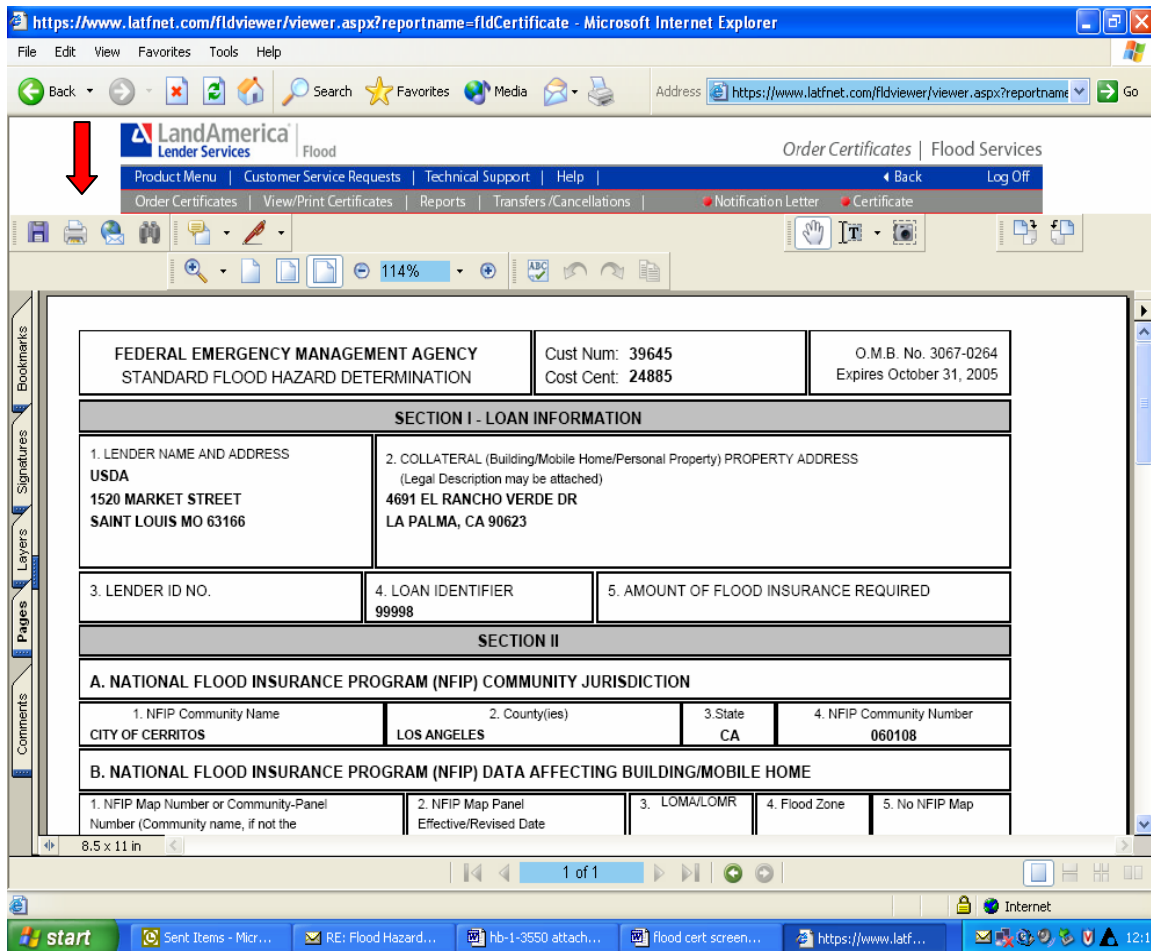
Remarks: []

9. Use the **TAB** key to move between the fields. Insert required information in the shaded areas: Loan ID, Borrower Name, and Property Address.

10. The **SERVICE TYPE** field will default to “Certification and Life of Loan (LOL) Tracking.”

11. Click “Submit” as shown above to order the determination after all required information has been entered.

12. If the address entered is located in the database, you will be able to view and print your completed certificate immediately. The following screen will be displayed:



13. Click the **printer icon** in the tool bar to print the certificate. If the Standard Flood Hazard Determination does not print on one page, adjust the margin widths under the Microsoft Internet Explorer Page Setup Options.

14. If the address entered is not located in the database, it will be necessary for LAFTnet to search the property manually. If necessary, the following screen will be displayed:

LATF Flood Manual Order: 39645-24885 - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address: https://www.latfnet.com/Flood/ManualOrder.aspx?Addition...

LandAmerica Lender Services Flood

Order Certificates | Flood Services

Product Menu | Customer Service Requests | Technical Support | Back | Log Off

Order Certificates | View/Print Certificates | Reports | Transfers/Cancellations | Automation Tips

MAIN BRANCH Your Order may require a 'MANUAL' determination.

After reviewing the information, select one of the following options below.

- **Submit Additional Information** - Validate all data below including county name and make changes or add additional information such as parcel/tax ID for a possible "AUTOMATIC" determination.
- **Accept Manual Search** - will take 24 hours or less to process.
- **Cancel Order**

Contact Name: BRANCH MAIN Phone: 000-000-0000

Email Address: Fax Number: 000-000-0000

Cc:Email Address: Cc:Email Address:

Loan ID: 0045858745 Service Type: Certification and LOL Tracking

Loan Type: Purchase Property Type: Residential

Borrower: demo

New Construction Vacant Lot

* If the House # is unknown, please enter TBD in the house # field.
* If the Zip Code is unknown, please enter 00000 in the Zip code field.
The State is necessary to expedite your order.

Property Address: House # 1234 Street MOCKINGBIRD LANE Zip 90623 City LA PALMA State CA

County Name:

Legal Description: Lot/Sec Blk/Twp Tract/Rng

Additional Legal:

or Attach file: Browse...

Parcel or Tax ID:

Latitude: 378.000000 Longitude: -972.000000

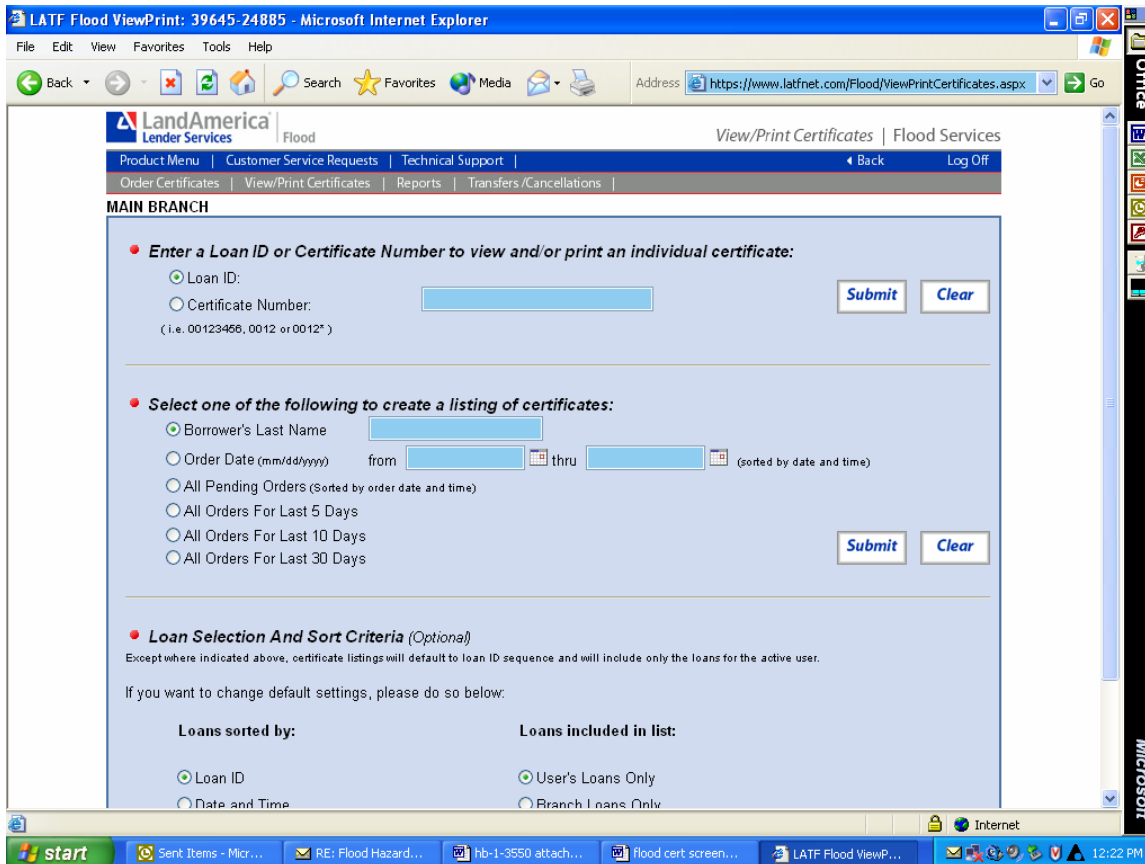
Remarks:

Submit Additional Information Accept Manual Search Cancel Order

15. Three choices are available at this screen: "Submit Additional Information," "Accept Manual Search," and "Cancel Order."

16. Completed orders will be available for viewing and printing from the "View/Print Completed Certificates" option within 24 hours unless otherwise notified of a delay.

17. **View/Print Certificates:** Click “View/Print Certificates” from the toolbar or the Main Menu. The following screen will appear:



18. You may search for completed certificates by “Loan ID Number,” “Borrower’s Last Name,” “Pending Orders,” or “Order Date.” Select the appropriate option and **click** “Submit.”

19. Select the desired report from the subsequent list and obtain your certificate.

20. To print, **click** the “Microsoft Internet Explorer print icon.”

21. **Reports:** The “**Report**” option may be utilized to list those Flood Hazard Determinations generated for a specific State or County within the past one to three months. **Click “Reports”** from the Main Menu and the following screen will appear:

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window with the address bar displaying <https://www.latfnet.com/Flood/Reports.aspx>. The website header includes the LandAmerica Lender Services logo and navigation links for Product Menu, Customer Service Requests, Technical Support, Order Certificates, View/Print Certificates, Reports, and Transfers/Cancellations. The main content area is titled "MAIN BRANCH" and contains two report selection forms.

Life of Loan Reports

Note: For revisions older than 60 days please enter a [customer service request](#).

Report Type:

- Into SFHA* From Non SFHA*
- Into Non SFHA* from SFHA*
- In SFHA* With Zone Change
- In Non SFHA* With Zone Change
- No Zone Change
- Community Status Change

Report Period:

- Last 10 Days
- Last 30 Days
- Last 60 Days

* SFHA = Special Flood Hazard Area

Responsiveness Reports

Report Period:

- Current Month To Date
- Last Month
- Last 3 Months

Loans:

- All Lender Loans

Select Report Detail:

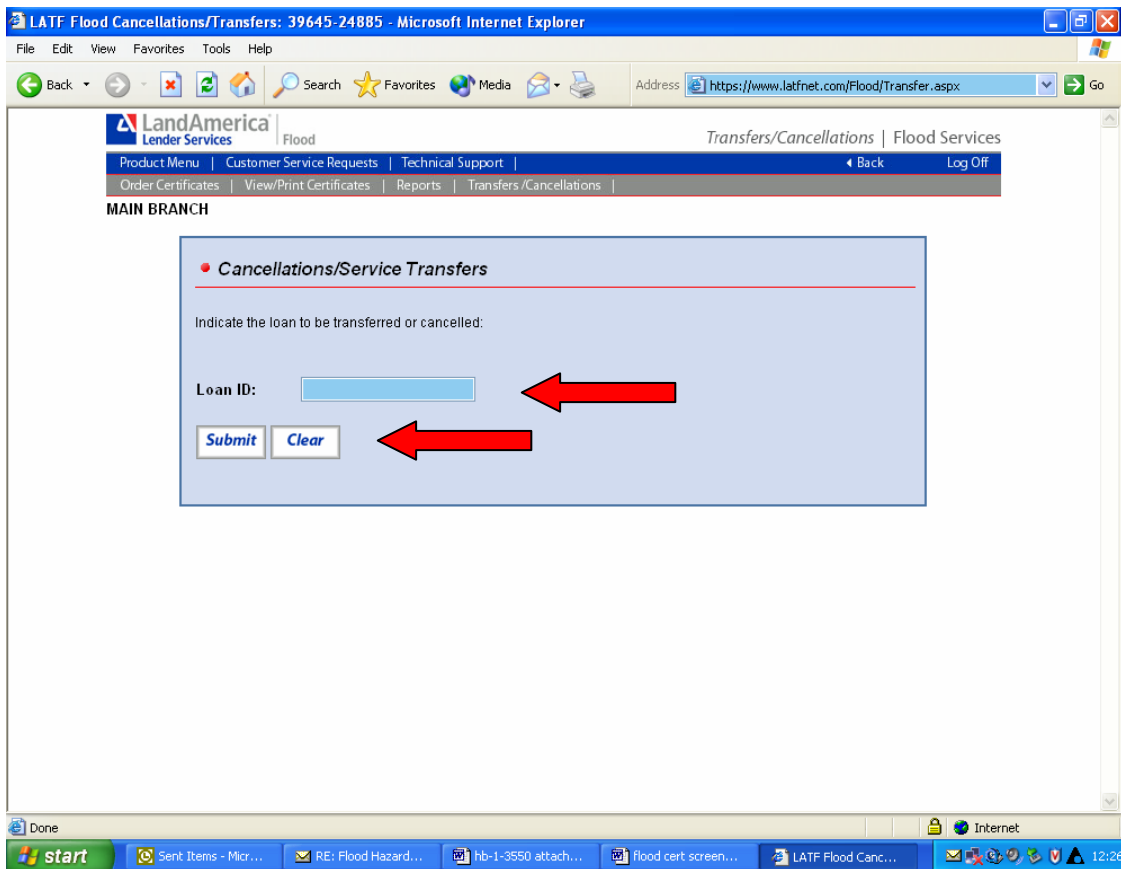
- Summary
- State

County:

22. Select the Report Period, Report Detail, and **click “Submit.”**

23. **Transfer/Cancellations:** This option may be used during (but is not limited to) the following circumstances: When a Rural Development loan is refinanced and Rural Development is made aware of the identity of that lender, when a Rural Development loan is paid in full or the account debt settled, or to cancel a request made in error and not yet billed to Rural Development.

24. Click **“Transfer/Cancellations”** on the main screen. The following screen will appear:



25. Input the Loan ID and **click “Submit”**. The following screen will appear:

ATF Flood Cancellations/Transfers Detail: 39645-24885 - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Search Favorites Media Address https://www.latfnet.com/Flood/TransferServiceDetail.aspx?

LandAmerica Lender Services Flood Transfers/Cancellations Flood Services

Product Menu Customer Service Requests Technical Support Back Log Off

Order Certificates View/Print Certificates Reports Transfers/Cancellations

MAIN BRANCH

Cancellations/Service Transfers
(Choose one of the following options below and click submit.)

Loan ID: 99998

Cancel Flood Certification

Borrower: DEMODEMODEMO45675 Co-Borrower:

Address: 4691 EL RANCHO VERDE
LA PALMA, CA 90623-2409

Service Transfer Request

New Lender/ Servicer Name:

New Loan ID:

Mailing Address:

Street:

City:

State: Zip Code:

26. Enter the New Servicer Name, Loan ID and Mailing Address if known. **Click** “Submit.”

27. **Customer Service Requests.** This screen may be used to contact a LATFnet representative with any questions that may arise in the process. You may also contact a Customer Service Office directly at the following telephone numbers: (626) 966-0616, (727) 524-9200, and (303) 799-6557.

Click **“Customer Service Requests”** from the Main Menu and the following screen will appear.

https://www.latfnet.com/Flood/ServiceRequest.aspx - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address: https://www.latfnet.com/Flood/ServiceRequest.aspx

LandAmerica Lender Services Tax and Flood Customer Service Request

Shaded areas indicate required information.
Email Customer Service with your questions and/or requests.

Name: MAIN BRANCH

Company: USDA

Phone Number: Ext:

Fax Number: 0000000000

E-Mail Address:

Loan ID:

Certificate Number: Seq:

Type of Request:

Questions and/or Comments:

To find the branch responsible for this certificate, [click here](#).
Please send this request to the one of the following offices:
COVINA, CA 91724

28. **Fill in all shaded areas** with the required information. **Select** the LATFnet office nearest your location and **click** on the **“Send”** key.

EXCEPTIONS, EXCLUSIONS, DISAGREEMENTS OR CUSTOMER DISPUTES

Customer disputes regarding the Standard Flood Zone Determination issued by LATFnet are likely to fall into one of two categories:

- The customer may believe that all or part of their site (in particular, that portion of the site which contains the dwelling) is outside of the Special Flood Hazard Area. The customer can obtain a survey or plat map, which they believe supports their position and which shows the exact location of the dwelling on the site. This plat map or survey can then be sent to LATFNET with a request that LATFNET reconsider their determination in light of this new information. LATFNET will manually examine this new information in relation to their FEMA flood mapping data and if appropriate, issue a corrected Standard Flood Hazard Determination. If LATFNET is able to determine that all of the site, or at least that part of the site which contains the dwelling, is not within the Special Flood Hazard Area, flood insurance will not be required of the customer. **Click** on the “Customer Service” option at the Main Menu to contact LATFNET for further assistance.
- The customer may believe that their dwelling is elevated above the Special Flood Hazard Area, even though the area surrounding the dwelling is in the Special Flood Hazard Area. In such cases, the customer can be referred to FEMA for possible assistance. With an elevation certificate, customers can sometimes obtain a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) or a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR), which will officially exclude part or all of their site from the Special Flood Hazard Area. These Letters are generally available for small elevated areas, which are not reflected by the FEMA maps, and for sites that have been filled in since the FEMA maps were issued. **(FEMA charges a fee for this service that must be paid by the customer)**. It is important to understand that only FEMA has the authority to amend a FEMA map and that only a LOMA or LOMR issued by FEMA can officially remove part or all of a site from the Special Flood Hazard Area.

If a LOMA or LOMR is received by the customer, a copy should be forwarded with the original Standard Flood Hazard Determination in the loan closing package. The documentation will be imaged at the Centralized Servicing Center (CSC) for future reference in servicing the account. This customer will not be required to have a flood insurance policy on the property.

If the customer cannot obtain a LOMA or LOMR from FEMA before closing, the customer must submit a paid flood insurance policy. When the documentation is obtained, the customer must forward a copy to CSC to waive the flood requirement.
