

0596-0227 “Community Forest Program,” Comments Received on the Proposed Rule Relating to Information Collection

The proposed rule notice and request for comment appeared in the Federal Register Volume 76, Number 4, published January 6, 2011 located on pages 744-751. The Forest Service received over 180 comments from 38 respondents; no comments specifically addressed the information collection burden on the public pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act; twenty comments from seven respondents were received on the cost and hour burden imposed by this proposed rule. The remaining comments dealt with aspects of the program not associated with information collection. Comments, summaries, and responses are available in the Federal Register Volume 76, Number 203, published Thursday, October 20, 2011 located on pages 65124-65128 and are appended to the end of this supporting statement.

All twenty comments on cost and hour burden dealt with a perceived burden on State Foresters, Indian tribe officials, and/ or professional foresters and the summary and response can be found under Section 230.3 comments on the Application Process and is located in column two of page 65127 in the above cited Federal Register Notice.

In response to the comments received, the language of the final rule was changed to emphasize the voluntary nature of State Forester or equivalent Tribal official involvement by stating “based on available time and resources.” The only requirement is to forward all applications they receive for the Community Forest Program to the US Forest Service, State Foresters/ Indian tribe official participation in the Community Forest Program is voluntary and does not confer any liability for the program to the State/ Indian tribe. We also addressed comments which sought to mandate the involvement of professional foresters by clarifying that while professional foresters may provide excellent advice, their participation is not mandated by the program. See attached public comments and replies.