

For: State and County Offices

County Committee (COC) Review of Local Administrative Area (LAA) Boundaries

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Field Operations



1 Overview

A Background

On August 17, 2004, the Secretary of Agriculture published in the Federal Register (FR) proposed uniform guidelines for conducting elections of FSA COC's according to Section 10708 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-171) (2002 Farm Bill). After analysis of the comments received, the Secretary issued final uniform guidelines on January 18, 2005, in FR.

One of the guideline requirements is that COC's complete their annual review of LAA boundaries within each FSA County Office jurisdiction no later than April 1, of each year.

Another guideline requirement calls for County Offices to determine whether redrawing the LAA boundaries or increasing the number of LAA's in a given area will assist in ensuring the fair representation of socially disadvantaged (SDA) producers in the area over which COC has jurisdiction.

Any proposed change in LAA's must be opened to public comment before any change is approved by STC.

B Purpose

This notice provides State Offices, COC's, and County Offices with:

- guidance to establish LAA's
- dates to complete reviewing LAA boundaries
- timeframes for public notice and comment period when LAA boundaries are changed
- guidance for offices recently involved, or soon to be involved, in office consolidations.

<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>August 1, 2006</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
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1 Overview (Continued)

C Contact

For questions about this notice, contact:

- Ken Nagel, DAFO, at 202-720-7890
- Deborah Johnson, DAFO, at 202-720-0067.

2 Action

A COC Action

COC's shall:

- follow instructions in 15-AO, Section 3 for reviewing LAA boundaries
- determine whether redrawing LAA boundaries or increasing the number of LAA's in a given area will assist in ensuring the fair representation of socially disadvantaged producers
- provide notice to the public and allow 15 days before submitting to STC for public comment if LAA boundaries are redrawn
- complete the COC review of LAA boundaries and request STC's approval of LAA boundaries by submitting the following to STC no later than April 1, 2006:
 - boundary changes on FSA-582
 - county map showing the proposed boundary changes
 - justification for the proposed boundary changes with COC's recommendations and DD's concurrence
 - comments received from the public about the proposed changes
 - a request for STC's approval of the existing LAA boundaries by submitting FSA-582, if no changes are made
- ensure that the correct LAA's and LAA voter lists are prepared for the 2006 election after STC approval of boundaries.

Note: COC shall document the review and determination about LAA boundaries in the COC minutes.

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2 Action (Continued)

B COC Action When Combining Offices

COC's shall ensure that no more than five LAA's exist after any office combination.

All office combinations completed:

- **before** March 1, 2006, shall establish one COC representing the jurisdiction of the combined counties for the December 2006 election, with no more than five LAA's
- **between** March 1 and September 1, 2006, shall follow the 2006 COC makeup election calendar (to be provided at a later date) to establish one COC representing the jurisdiction of the combined counties, with no more than five LAA's
- **after** September 1, 2006, shall contact DAFO for guidance.

Note: Shared management is **not** an office combination. An office combination is the result of closing 1 or more offices.

C STC Action

STC's shall:

- submit STC determination to COC in sufficient time for COC corrective action or implementation
- document all decisions in the minutes
- conduct reviews of selected COC's to determine if redrawing LAA's will assist in ensuring the fair representation of socially disadvantaged producers in the county or multi-county jurisdiction
- select COC's for additional review when STC finds evidence of under representation of socially disadvantaged producers on a COC and inform DAFO of finding
- complete the STC review of COC LAA boundary changes and approve no later than May 31, 2006.

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3 Publicizing Proposed LAA Changes

A Proposed LAA Changes

County Offices shall:

- publicize proposed LAA changes by the following:
 - posting proposed changes in LAA boundaries in County Offices
 - locally publicize proposed LAA boundaries in a County Office publication and local media, providing the County Office address, phone number, and FAX number
- ensure that 15 days notice is provided for comments to be received from eligible voters before the proposed LAA boundaries are submitted for approval by STC.

4 Computer Operations

A LAA Updates

County Offices shall ensure that:

- COC and LAA data is updated according to 15-AO, paragraphs 67 and 68
- LAA changes are in effect no later than June 15, 2006.

B Voter Data Verification

County Offices shall ensure that:

- voters are listed in the correct LAA in all cases, especially if LAA boundaries have changed
- all voter names and addresses are correct for each LAA
- all voter flags are correct.

C Eligible Voter Lists

County Offices shall:

- ensure that the eligible voter list for each LAA conducting an election in 2006 is available for public view no later than June 15, 2006
- continually update eligible voter lists throughout the year as changes occur.