

(g) An amendment, revision, or adoption of a land and resource management plan that is made independent of a project or activity (subject to either the objection process of §219.32 or the administrative appeal and review procedures of part 217 in effect prior to November 9, 2000 (*see* 36 CFR parts 200 to 299, Revised as of July 1, 2000)).

(h) Concurrences and recommendations to other Federal agencies.

(i) Hazardous fuel reduction projects conducted under provisions of the HFRA, as set out at part 218, subpart A, of this title.

[68 FR 33595, June 4, 2003, as amended at 69 FR 1533, Jan. 9, 2004]

§ 215.13 Who may appeal.

(a) Individuals and organizations who submit substantive written or oral comments during the 30-day comment period for an environmental assessment, or 45-day comment period for a draft environmental impact statement (§215.6, 40 CFR 1506.10; FSH 1909.15, Chapter 20), except as provided for in paragraph (c) of this section, may file an appeal. Comments received from an authorized representative(s) of an organization are considered those of the organization only; individual members of that organization do not meet appeal eligibility solely on the basis of membership in an organization; the member(s) must submit substantive comments as an individual in order to meet appeal eligibility.

(b) When an appeal lists multiple individuals or organizations, each shall meet the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section. Individuals or organizations that do not meet the requirements of paragraph (a) shall not be accepted as appellants.

(c) Federal agencies may not appeal.

(d) Federal employees, who otherwise meet the requirements of this part for filing appeals in a non-official capacity, shall comply with Federal conflict of interest statutes at 18 U.S.C. 202–209 and with employee ethics requirements at 5 CFR part 2635. Specifically, employees shall not be on official duty nor use government property or equipment in the preparation or filing of an appeal. Further, employees shall not incorporate information unavailable to the public, *i.e.* Federal agency docu-

ments that are exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552 (b)).

§ 215.14 Appeal content.

(a) It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project- or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why the Responsible Official's decision should be reversed (paragraph (b)(6–9)).

(b) The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer §215.8 in writing. At a minimum, an appeal must include the following:

(1) Appellant's name and address (§215.2), with a telephone number, if available;

(2) Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);

(3) When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant (§215.2) and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;

(4) The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;

(5) The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either this part or part 251, subpart C (§215.11(d));

(6) Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;

(7) Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;

(8) Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and

(9) How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

(c) The Appeal Deciding Officer shall not process an appeal when one or more of the following applies:

(1) An appellant's identity is not provided or cannot be determined from the signature (written or electronically scanned) and a reasonable means of contact is not provided.

(2) The appellant has not provided a reasonable means of contact.

(3) The decision cannot be identified.

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(4) The appeal is illegible for any reason, including those submitted electronically in a format different from that specified in the legal notice.

§215.15 Appeal time periods and process.

(a) *Time to file an appeal.* Written appeals, including any attachments, must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record (§215.7). It is the responsibility of appellants to ensure that their appeal is received in a timely manner.

(b) *Computation of time periods.* (1) All time periods are computed using calendar days, including Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays. However, when the time period expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, the time is extended to the end of the next Federal working day (11:59 p.m.).

(2) The day after the publication of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record (§215.7) is the first day of the appeal-filing period.

(3) The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

(c) *Evidence of timely filing.* When there is a question about timely filing of an appeal, timeliness shall be determined by:

(1) The date of the postmark, e-mail, fax, or other means of filing (for example, express delivery service) an appeal and any attachment;

(2) The time and date imprint at the correct Appeal Deciding Officer's office on a hand-delivered appeal and any attachments; or

(3) When an appeal is electronically mailed, the appellant should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgment from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the appellant does not receive an automated acknowledgment of the receipt of the appeal, it is the appellant's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

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(d) *Extensions.* Time extensions, except as noted in paragraph (b) of this section, are not permitted.

(e) *Other timeframes.* Unless an appeal is resolved through the informal disposition process (§215.17), the following timeframes and processes shall apply:

(1) *Transmittal of decision documentation.* Within 15 days of the close of the appeal-filing period, the Responsible Official shall transmit the decision documentation to the Appeal Reviewing Officer including a list of those individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments.

(2) *Appeal disposition.* Within 45 days following the end of the appeal-filing period, the Appeal Deciding Officer should render a written decision to the appellant(s) concerning their appeal. When an appeal decision is not rendered by day 45, the Appeal Deciding Officer shall notify the appellant(s) in writing that an appeal decision will not be issued (§215.18(b)).

(3) When an appeal decision is not issued within 45 days, the Responsible Official's decision is deemed the final agency action.

§215.16 Dismissal of appeal without review.

(a) The Appeal Deciding Officer shall dismiss an appeal without review when one or more of the following applies:

(1) The postmark on an appeal mailed or otherwise filed (for example, express mail service) or the evidence of the date sent on an e-mailed or faxed appeal is not within the 45-day appeal-filing period (§215.15).

(2) The time and date imprint at the correct Appeal Deciding Officer's office on a hand-delivered appeal is not within the 45-day appeal-filing period (§215.15).

(3) The requested relief or change cannot be granted under law or regulation.

(4) The appellant has appealed the same decision under part 251 (§215.11(d)).

(5) The decision is not subject to appeal (§215.12).

(6) The individual or organization did not submit substantive comments during the comment period (§215.6).

(7) The Responsible Official withdraws the decision.

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(8) The appeal does not provide sufficient information in response to § 215.14(b)(6) through (b)(9) for the Appeal Deciding Officer to render a decision.

(9) The appellant withdraws the appeal.

(b) Any additional information or attachment to an appeal that is not filed within the 45-day appeal-filing period shall not be considered with the appeal.

(c) The Appeal Deciding Officer shall give written notice to the appellant and the Responsible Official when an appeal is dismissed and shall give the reasons for dismissal.

§ 215.17 Informal disposition.

(a) *Offer to meet.* When an appeal is received, the Responsible Official, or designee, must contact the appellant and offer to meet and discuss resolution of the issues raised in the appeal. This contact shall be made as soon as practicable after the Appeal Deciding Officer receives the appeal and the Responsible Official is notified. In the case of multiple names or organizations, it is the responsibility of the lead appellant (§ 215.2) to contact any other persons named in their appeal who may desire to participate in the informal disposition meeting. If the appellant(s) decline to meet, the Responsible Official shall so advise the Appeal Deciding Officer.

(b) *Time and location of meeting.* When an appellant agrees to meet, the initial meeting shall take place within 15 days after the closing date for filing an appeal (§ 215.15). The location of the meeting shall be in the vicinity of the lands affected by the decision. When the District Ranger is the Responsible Official, meetings will generally be located on or near that Ranger District. When the Forest Supervisor, Regional Forester, or the Chief is the Responsible Official, meetings will generally take place at a location within or near the National Forest.

(c) *Meeting structure.* Generally, the appellant(s) should be physically present at informal disposition meetings. If the appellant cannot attend a meeting in person because of schedule conflicts or travel distances, alternative types of meetings (such as telephone conferences or video con-

ferences) may be arranged. All meetings are open to the public.

(d) *Outcome.* After the informal disposition meeting, the Responsible Official shall notify the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing of the meeting participants and which of the following three outcomes occurred.

(1) An appellant and the Responsible Official reach agreement on disposition of all or a portion of an appeal. The appellant shall withdraw all or the agreed upon portion of the appeal by letter to the Appeal Deciding Officer within 15 days of the agreement. When the appellant does not withdraw the appeal in writing, formal review and disposition of the appeal shall continue.

(2) As a result of the agreement reached at the informal disposition meeting, new information is received or changes to the original decision or environmental analysis are proposed. The Responsible Official must follow the correction, supplementation, or revision of environmental documentation and reconsideration of decisions to take action guidance in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 10, section 18, and §§ 215.3 and 215.4.

(3) An appeal is not entirely resolved through informal disposition. Formal review and disposition of the unresolved portion of the appeal shall continue (§ 215.18).

§ 215.18 Formal review and disposition procedures.

(a) *Scope of review.* The Appeal Deciding Officer shall complete a review based on the appeal record (§ 215.2) and the Appeal Reviewing Officer's recommendation (§ 215.19(b)).

(b) *Disposition.* The Appeal Deciding Officer shall either:

(1) Issue a written appeal decision within 45 days following the end of the appeal-filing period, which affirms or reverses the Responsible Official's decision, either in whole or in part, and which may include instructions for further action. When an appeal decision involves instructions concerning new information or changed circumstances, the Responsible Official must follow the correction, supplementation, or revision of environmental documentation and reconsideration of decisions to take action guidance in FSH 1909.15,