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Release. No. 309-03

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 29, 2003 -- A public hearing on proposals that would amend the producer-handler provisions in the Pacific Northwest and Arizona-Las Vegas federal milk orders is being reconvened at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2004, at the Embassy Suites Hotel Alexandria, 1900 Diagonal Road, Alexandria, Va. 22314.

The initial hearing in this proceeding was held Sept. 23-25, 2003, in Tempe, Ariz., and reconvened Nov. 17-21, 2003 in Seattle, Wash. Due to the number of witnesses seeking to present testimony on the proposals contained in the original hearing notice issued July 31, 2003, USDA is reconvening the hearing again. Proposals being considered would end the regulatory exemption from the pricing and pooling provisions of the Pacific Northwest and the Arizona-Las Vegas milk marketing orders for producer-handlers whose Class I route disposition exceeds three million pounds per month in either market. USDA is also considering a proposal that would eliminate the ability to simultaneously pool the same milk on the Arizona-Las Vegas milk order and on a State-operated order that provides for marketwide pooling.

Notice of the reconvened hearing appears in today's Federal Register. Copies may be obtained from the Pacific Northwest, Arizona-Las Vegas & Western milk marketing orders office, USDA/AMS/Dairy Programs, 1930 - 220th St. S.E., Suite 102, Bothell, WA 98021-847; or USDA/AMS/Dairy Programs, 10050 N. 25th Ave., Suite 302, Phoenix, AZ 85021-1664; or <http://www.fmmaseattle.com>; or AMS/Dairy Programs, USDA Stop 0231 - Room 2971, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-0231; or <http://www.ams.usda.gov/dairy/>.

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