



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity

***Farm Service Agency *Food and Nutrition *Natural Resources Conservation Service *Rural Development**

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South Dakota Fast Facts - 2016

State's Child Poverty Rate: 18.1%
 State's Overall Poverty Rate: 12.8%
 StrikeForce State Since: 2013
 Number of StrikeForce Counties: 13
 Total Outreach Events: 24
 Number of Community Partners: 31
 Total USDA Projects: 1,274
 Total USDA Investments: 76 million

Some of our StrikeForce Community Partners

- *Department of Housing and Urban Development
- *Enterprise Communities
- *Great Plains Native Asset Building Coalition
- *GROW South Dakota
- *Oglala Lakota College
- *Sinte Gleska University
- *South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development
- *South Dakota Indian Business Alliance
- *South Dakota Office of Tribal Relations
- *South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition

In 2010 USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack created a pilot project "Strike Force" to provide assistance to economically impacted areas of the nation. USDA officials joined with other federal, state, local, and Tribal leaders to increase awareness of USDA programs and to help build program participation through community outreach and technical assistance. The 4 principle federal agencies are: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, and the Food and Nutrition Service. The objective of this newsletter is to expand USDA program education for customers, employees and partners.

Additional web sites for information:

USDA Program Resource Guide:
http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/USDAProgramResourceGuide_SDFinal.pdf

USDA Urban Agriculture Toolkit:
<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/knownyourfarmer?navid=kyf-urban-agric>

South Dakota Tribal Newsletter site:
<http://sdtribalrelations.com/Newsletter.aspx>

USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION

Supper Meals at Pine Ridge School

The Pine Ridge Oglala Lakota Sioux Indian Reservation is located in the Southwest corner of South Dakota and is approximately 2.7 million acres (11,000 square miles). Unemployment rates continue to be approximately 85 percent and the mean income on the reservation is \$2,600 to \$3,500 each year.

The reservation has two public school districts, one parochial school, six Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Tribal grant schools and one fully BIE operated school. Pine Ridge School resides in the largest community within the reservation boundaries and is fully operated by BIE. It is the only school that has a residential dorm. During a Summer Meals Kickoff event at Pine Ridge School in June of 2015, school board members approached USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Administrator Audrey Rowe to see if there was a program available that would reimburse the school for the suppers that were being served to the children residing in the dorms.

Weekly conference calls were established to answer questions and to follow up on progress of tasks. FNS staff worked diligently with the college staff to develop a Vended Meal Contract that could easily be modified and met all the procurement and program requirements for operating the program. In early January of 2016, Oglala Lakota College received the green light from their Board of Trustees to move forward with the program. Pine Ridge School also received the green light from BIE leaders in Washington, DC to enter into the contract with the college.

On January 11, 2016, supper meals were served to children in the school cafeteria and reimbursed through FNS's At-Risk Child and Adult Care Food Program. Meal service is now taking place Monday through Thursday each week during the school year. An average of 110 children are receiving a hot supper at night during the school year. Now that the program is up and running, the school plans to promote it more heavily in the school as well as in the surrounding community. This program will ensure that the youth from the ages of 0 to 18 on Pine Ridge will receive a healthy, nutritious meal four nights per week.

USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Loneman Pipeline Project Benefits Livestock and Ranchers

PINE RIDGE – It's from the small swell of a windswept prairie hilltop on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation that a herd of cows suspiciously eyes a tire-ringed water tank that will soon spring to life with fresh water.

The 1600-gallon tank, located on leased land from the Oglala Sioux Tribe, is part of construction on Phase I of the Loneman StrikeForce project. The project, which will pipe water off the Mni Wiconi rural water supply pipeline to designated land units for livestock, and is funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA's StrikeForce program is part of President Obama's initiative to address persistent poverty in parts of America. Launched in 2010, more than 1,500 partnerships between the USDA and local officials and community leaders have resulted in almost \$24 million of investment in high-poverty rural areas in the U.S. The Loneman StrikeForce project, managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, aims to solve one of the reservation's most serious problems – no water.

"For most of the whole western half of the reservation, there's no reliable livestock water," said Tate Lantz, NRCS Resource Conservationist, which means financial hardship for the farmers and ranchers who rely on the income and livelihood of livestock and produce.



Cows grazing on dry rangeland on the Pine Ridge Reservation

Willard Clifford, of the Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Maintenance Department, said farmers and ranchers have few options. “You can’t drill any kind of well, so you’re dependent on stock dams or creeks that are inadequate.”

The first phase of Loneman, which will serve two range units, marks South Dakota’s first StrikeForce project and will cost an estimated \$430,000. Construction kicked off this summer, with crews constructing the first unit off the main Mni Wiconi pipeline just a stone’s throw from South Dakota Highway 18, near the Prairie Wind Casino. The individuals who lease the land from the Oglala Sioux Tribe will be responsible for maintaining the water lines and tanks.

The project has plenty of oversight, said Lantz, including partnerships with the Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Maintenance Department and the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Bureau of Reclamation designed and constructed the Mni Wiconi, which was specifically for human consumption. Because the pipeline was built over capacity, experts estimate that it will be able to accommodate the StrikeForce pipelines, which tribe officials have designated as strictly for livestock consumption.

Lantz anticipates an increase in the number of proposals for StrikeForce projects, which could improve a diverse number of resource management issues across the state. The first round of money was issued in 2014. The NRCS received three proposals in 2015 and funded another seven proposals this year.

“A project like Loneman gets at the heart of the NRCS’s mission,” Lantz said. “The cows drink fresh, clean water and graze on the land. Their manure improves the soil, which improves the plant life, which improves their digestion and overall health. Healthier, heavier cows help the local economy. “We’re improving the land resource and the livestock is a tool to do that.”

Denise Mesteth, Director of the Oglala Sioux Tribe Land office, wrote the original grant proposal and said the project can only do good things for the reservation community. “The water is good, the grass is good and it increases the value of that land unit.”

For years, farmers and ranchers have hauled water to their land, or paid for a water line from another county – both laborious and costly.

Mesteth said, “The conservation district began work in 2002 to bring focus and attention to the resource needs on the reservation, water being number one. “We identified the range units that really needed it.”



Installation of livestock pipeline on Pine Ridge

Melvin Cummings has ranched on the reservation for 57 years. His land is not included in Phase I, and he hopes to see the program expand. Cummings said, “One of the biggest hold backs to having no water for your livestock is that if they don’t have water and are walking more than two miles to get to it, it’s 10 pounds off every calf.”

Tom Conroy, of the Oglala Sioux Tribe Conservation District, agreed and said, “The reality of drought is a constant struggle. “We’re made up of 85 percent of water. It’s a source of life. If you don’t have water, you have nothing. This will be a tremendous help to the people.”

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT

U.S. Department of Education Showcases Success, Challenges of Native American Student in First Ever Multimedia Series, “Justin Goes to College”

The U.S. Department of Education is releasing a four-part multimedia series on Medium telling the story of how Justin Mesteth, an 18-year-old Native American student on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, gets accepted to Wesleyan University in Connecticut, and the adults in his life who have helped him succeed. The series is based on the idea “It takes a village” and each piece identifies a specific person who has impacted his life and highlights their contribution to it. The series also touches on the obstacles that Justin and his family have faced, including a mother who struggled with alcoholism, becoming a single parent household, chronic illness and the unique challenges of growing up on Pine Ridge. This first multimedia effort by the Education Department tells a story through words, images and videos. To learn more and see the videos go to <http://www.ed.gov/news/media-advisories/us-department-education-showcases-success-challenges-native-american-student-first-ever-multimedia-series-%E2%80%9Cjustin-goes-college%E2%80%9D>.

USDA Expands Access to Capital for Rural Businesses

Huron, South Dakota, June 09, 2016 —

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development unveiled new rules to expand access to capital for rural businesses. The changes, published in the Federal Register, make it easier for rural businesses to qualify for loans under USDA’s Business & Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program. This new regulation will go into effect August 2, 2016. [Read more...](#)

USDA Rural Development Announces Availability of Homeownership Opportunities

Huron, South Dakota, May 16, 2016 —

Spring has sprung and that brings thoughts of planting flowers and mowing the lawn. If you are thinking of purchasing your own house (and garden, too), USDA Rural Development has over \$2 million available in Direct Home Loan Program funds to help rural residents in South Dakota become homeowners. All funds must be obligated by September 30, 2016. [Read more...](#)

USDA Lowers Cost to Refinance Rural Housing Loans

Washington, District of Columbia, May 16, 2016 —

USDA Rural Housing Service Administrator Tony Hernandez today announced a series of changes that will make it faster and cheaper for homeowners to refinance USDA mortgages. [Read more...](#)

What is USDA Rural Development’s Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program?

Huron, South Dakota, July 13, 2016 —

USDA Rural Development’s Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program or RMAP, encourages the development, whether by start-up or expansion, of small businesses in rural areas. Applications are now being accepted, with the next quarterly funding review scheduled for September 30, 2016. [Read more...](#)

USDA Helps Fund Two Distance Learning and Telemedicine Projects in South Dakota

Huron, South Dakota, July 15, 2016 —

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will fund 81 [Distance Learning and Telemedicine](#) (DLT) [projects in 32 states](#). These projects will help connect rural communities with medical and educational experts in other parts of the country, increasing access to health care, substance misuse treatment and advanced educational opportunities. [Read more...](#)

Single Family Home Loan Program

Direct Single Family Housing Loans are available at 100 percent financing with no down payment directly through USDA Rural Development for a period of 30-38 years, and at a reasonable interest rate, currently 3.00 percent. Qualification for a Rural Direct Home Loan is also based on the household's income and credit history. A portion of the interest payment on the loan may be subsidized, which makes purchasing a home more affordable for families and individuals who live, or want to live, in rural South Dakota. USDA Rural Development Rural Direct Home Loans may be made for the purchase of an existing home or new construction.

Home repair loans are also available for very low-income households and income limits vary by county and household size - USDA Rural Development has funds available for the 504 Direct Home Repair Loan program for rural residents of South Dakota. These loans can be made for up to \$20,000 with a repayment term to 20 years at one percent interest rate. Under this program, Grants of up to \$7,500 may be available to those 62 or older who cannot meet their home repair needs with loan funds. The grant funds can only be used to remove health or safety hazards.

USDA Rural Development in South Dakota has offices in Aberdeen, Huron, Mitchell, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Watertown, and Yankton.

For more information, visit the USDA Rural Development Website at <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-direct-home-loans/sd-0>

Parkview Villa Apartments Helps to Fulfill a Basic Human Need

Huron, South Dakota, June 06, 2016 —

Nationwide, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development has partnered with the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to increase food security, and reduce hunger by providing eligible low-income families access to healthy foods and nutrition education through its nutrition assistance programs. For the past several years, we have been partnering to feed children when school is out for the summer. At present, we are trying to build the number of Multi-Family Housing Properties providing support in South Dakota.

[Read more...](#)

USDA Recognizes Top Six Housing Lenders

Huron, South Dakota, June 06, 2016 —

In honor of June being national homeownership month and the 25th anniversary of a landmark USDA program that greatly expanded the availability of home loan financing for rural residents, USDA Rural Development is recognizing its top six lenders under the Guaranteed Rural Housing (GRH) loan program in South Dakota. In Fiscal Year 2016 alone, 45 approved lenders around the state participated in the GRH program and financed \$91.8 million to assist rural residents achieve homeownership. [Read more...](#)

Aberdeen Federal Credit Union



First Bank and Trust



Dakotaland Federal Credit Union



Plains Community Bank



Bankwest



First Dakota National Bank



Rural Development Program Deadlines	
Program	Application Deadline(s)
Rural Energy for America (REAP)	Applications accepted year round. Next funding deadlines are set for October 31, 2016 and March 31, 2017.
Biorefinery, Renewable Chemical, and Biobased Product Manufacturing Assistance Program (Formerly known as the Biorefinery Assistance Program)	2016 application deadline has passed. 2017 application deadlines are unknown at this time.
Business & Industry Loan Guarantees	Applications accepted year round.
Rural Business Development Grant (formally known as RBEG & RBOG)	Applications being accepted for 2017 funding.
Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program	Quarterly deadlines.
Intermediary Relending Program	Quarterly deadlines.
Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program	Quarterly deadlines.
Value Added Producer Grant	2017 application deadlines are unknown at this time.
Small Socially Disadvantaged Grant	2017 application deadlines are unknown at this time.
Rural Cooperative Development Grant	2017 application deadlines are unknown at this time.
Rural Community Development Initiative	2017 NOFA is expected to be issued next spring.
Water and Environmental Programs	On-going application cycles; can apply anytime.
Community Loan and Grant Programs	On-going application cycles; can apply anytime.
Single Family Housing Programs... 502 Very-Low and Low Direct Loans; 504 Loans and Grants ; and 502 Guaranteed Rural Housing (GRH) Loan Program	On-going application cycles; can apply anytime.
For additional program information, view the USDA Rural Development Programs Summary:	http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RD_ProgramMatrix.pdf

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.